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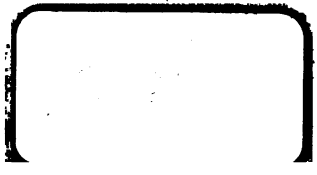

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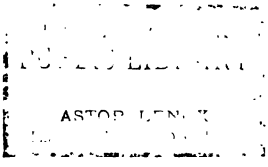

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SHE KISSED ME SMACK ON THE CHEEK AND SAID HER NAME WAS LOUISE

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What Outfit Buddy?

BY

T. HOWARD KELLY

FORMERLY PRIVATE IN THE 26TH DIVISION A.E.F.

Illustrated

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New York and London

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A GREAT many impressionable young men who become soldiers overnight and go to war feel strongly inspired to write books about their adventures. I felt the same way before the newness of the life on the western front had been rubbed away by constant friction with some of the more monotonous things of war, such as hunger, cold, mud, cooties, and other romance-destroying agents. I buried the idea of writing a book just before my division was called upon to stand between the Boches and Paris during the trying days of July and August of 1918. It is very good for me that I detached myself from the desire to write a war book about that time. Experience proved that it was necessary to give all my available time to the business of fighting the *guerre.*

The book-bug never came my way again, for I do not look upon *What Outfit, Buddy?* as the result of answering some insistent, invisible summons to write a war book. I did not intend writing a war book when I started the first line of *What Outfit, Buddy?* I merely hoped to let Jimmy McGee, a real, regular fighting Yank who has seen his share of *la guerre,* tell the story of the things that he encountered as a member of the American Expeditionary Force.

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I sincerely trust that my original intentions have carried.

If I have allowed Jimmy McGee to tell you his story, then I have fulfilled my hopes, for I believe that Jimmy McGee's story of the war is merely the universal version of the great adventure as held by legions of his comrades.

In my effort to let Jimmy tell his story I have not tried to use book language. I have used to the best of my ability the speech of men who became a real integral part of the *guerre* . . . . To do that it was necessary to let Jimmy and his comrades speak French in the manner of American soldiers. I tried to register the true value of their struggles with the difficult French language by resorting to phonetic spelling in the case of practically all French words which have become a part of the American Expeditionary Forces' vocabulary. Students of the beautiful, musical language of France will, I trust, grant me this indulgence, as I have taken the liberties only in the desire to tell America how its fighting men overcame the difficulties presented by living side by side with a people who spoke a foreign language.

T. Howard Kelly.

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WHAT OUTFIT, BUDDY?

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WHAT OUTFIT, BUDDY?

CHAPTER I

"WHAT OUTFIT, BUDDY?"

JIMMY McGEE, hanging on to a long, lean loaf of brown bread with his left hand and swinging a heavy, dangerous-looking cane in his right grip, moved leisurely over a white road of France toward the four-year-old battlelines that stretched between *Verdun* and *Saint-Mihiel.*

McGee, himself, was camouflaged beneath an assortment of things and stuff that would have made Panhandle Pete of funny-paper fame look like a smartly dressed gentleman in comparison. His make-up was not calculated to allow observers much chance to criticize his own physical attributes or failings.

A bit of reddish-brown hair managed to crop up in sundry places outside the distorted

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corners of the clownish thing that had been issued him in the name of an overseas cap. The part of his shirt collar that almost swallowed his ears and chin came very near hiding his freckled snub nose. But it didn't. The nose insisted on protruding enough to be seen. Jimmy's eyes, alone, were open and ready for inspection. Any one might have guessed the nationality of his ancestors by the laughing blue of his eyes. What could be seen of his features hinted that he owned a strong, good-looking face. Perhaps his long length of wide limb would have given him some individuality among a gang of six-footers, for he was exceptionally tall. Unfortunately his height was lost in the bulk of war-like paraphernalia that jangled from countless straps, ropes, and belts. Otherwise his identity was completely blanketed.

Nobody, except one of his own kind, would have ever recognized him as an American soldier. He was a sad departure from all that Army regulations and magazine covers had insisted upon as a typical member of the "best dressed and best fed army" in the world. Most likely Jimmy's own mother would have passed him up as a straying peddler. Perhaps Sergeant George Neil,

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McGee's pal and bunkie, might have recognized him by the stout, strong-muscled legs which were swathed in muddy war-putees,—that ended in a final strip of thin raglings below his knees,—and moved in an easy-going stride peculiar to his own ideas of speed.

However strange and disillusioning, Private, 1st Class, Jimmy McGee may have appeared to the men who designed the uniform and equipment of American soldiers, there was nothing about the boy to distinguish him apart from thousands of comrades in soiled and torn olive-drab, who had come out of the Chateau-Thierry rackett with their appreciation for neatly made packs and dress-parade tactics all shot to hell.

Appearances had long since ceased to count in his young life. He had forgotten all of the old O. D. stuff, after discovering that "squads right" and saluting could never win a *guerre*. Consequently Jimmy ambled along, loaded down to the hubs under a confusion of equipment and souvenirs that he had collected from three fronts during the past eight months, without a thought of anything, except the heighth of the hill that he was climbing and the emptiness of his stomach. The fact that he didn't know just exactly where

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he was, or where his outfit might be, wasn't causing him any worries. He had been separated from the battery too many times already and this latest separation was only twenty-four hours old,—a mere trifle to Jimmy McGee.

"Lost—strayed—and stolen—Guess I'm all three of 'em—*tous ensemble,* as the Frogs would rattle in that darn machine gun language of theirs," muttered McGee as he shifted the weight of a blanket roll that looked as if it contained a Baby Grand piano and a fat-legged stool.

"Well, I'll find the outfit before the *guerre encores,* anyhow. If I don't I'll turn myself in for salvage—anythin' to keep from bein' an M. P. or gettin' in the Quartermaster Corps. Those guys don't——"

Honk! . . . Honk! . . . Honk! . . .

Jimmy shut his mouth and got himself off of the road, just in time to miss being pressed into an old-fashioned pancake under the wheels of a truck that whizzed by like an Austrian 88.

"Great Gods!" I'd rather promenade along the top of a trench in broad daylight than leave my life in the hands of those fool truck-drivers. They ain't got a bit of respect

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for a man's body—ought to let 'em drive a tank across No Man's Land under a barrage once or twice—maybe then they'd quit tryin' to kill us poor guys that's fightin' this *guerre.*"

McGee thought some pretty hard things about truck drivers in general after getting that load off his chest and started to make another hill, being careful to hang close to the side of the road.

"What outfit, Buddy?"

Jimmy McGee stopped still in his tracks, steadied himself against his cane to keep from rolling back down the steep hill, and shook himself so roughly before answering that the tinware, brass, steel and other whatnots which were a part of his baggage made a noise like the cows coming home.

"Twenty-Sixth Division, Jack," he shot back, as if he were putting over a little barrage all by himself.

Then he advanced cautiously to inspect the strange-looking person who had asked him the old familiar question. For a passing moment Jimmy was pretty sure that the old gas had got to his eyes at last, or that his thoughts were getting the best of him. Surely the man who sat on the grass and was all

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rigged up like the soldiers in the Sunday papers and popular monthlies, must be a model—A sort of guide or index for his kind, thought Jimmy.

At last, after what seemed ten years to the waiting, strange one, the dust-sprinkled Yank said outloud, more to himself than anyone else, "*Oui*—it moves and breathes—guess it's real—take a chance, anyhow." Then to the object of his remarks: "What outfit, yourself, old man?"

"None—that is, so far," was the astonishing answer, made in a voice that hadn't taken on the tone of confidence which Jimmy knew well could only be found out where he and a bunch of his side-kickers had been living during the past few months.

"Well—that's a hell of a good outfit to belong to. Guess you ain't bothered with second lieutenants much then, eh?" queried Jimmy, pushing his shapeless roll over his head and letting it fall to the earth with a thud.

"How do you mean—worried?" asked the wondering man, whose appearance brought back memories of the hated O. D. days to Jimmy.

"Oh, you never had many of 'em hangin'

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around you for salutes, givin' foolish commands that ought to be listed with dead letters in the office at Washington. That's what I'm gettin' at . . . Get me, now?"

A gas-mask, two bulging *musettes,* the bottom of a mess-kit, and a French canteen were thrown to the ground. McGee's great heighth began to assert itself. He stretched his long arms and shook a case of field-glasses and a German luger aloose from their insecure attachments to his left shoulder straps.

"Yes, I see now. No, can't say that I've minded them so much as I haven't been in the Army long," replied Jimmy's roadside find.

"So," muttered Jimmy reflectively. "Say, when in hell did you enlist anyway?"

"I didn't—I was drafted," answered O. D., as McGee had already mentally nicknamed the man in front of him.

"*Oui—Oui*—I *compree,*" said the product of eight months in the mud and rain of the Western Front, nodding his head affirmatively.

Silence for a moment and then Jimmy said what was on his mind.

"Say, how does it feel to be that way buddy? It don't bother you at nights does it?"

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"Don't quite understand you," stammered the product of General Crowder's machine.

"*Pas compree,* eh? Just like a Frenchman when he don't want to give you what you want," answered Jimmy. "Well I'll try to shoot away the camouflage this time. Don't you ever wish that you'd enlisted?"

"Sure—I wanted to enlist when the war first started but my Dad had just died and he didn't leave much; not enough to pay his funeral expenses. My mother has always been sickly and Mary hadn't finished her business-schooling yet. I had to work like the deuce to keep things going— Then I was drafted."

"That's just the way with this damn army," interrupted Jimmy sympathetically. "They do everything like the French, backwards. Why the devil couldn't they have let you stay home and take care of your mother and Mary? There's enough of us big hams without any cares to fight this war. Who is Mary, your sister?" asked Jimmy bluntly; but he meant to be gentle.

"Yes, she is my sister; only nineteen. Two years younger than me," explained the drafted man.

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"How's Mary and your ma makin' it now?" was Jimmy's next question.

"Mary's finished business school and has a good job. I make a twenty-dollar allotment, and my mother gets twenty-five dollars from the Government along with that. They're doing pretty good now, so their letters tell me," was the frank response.

Jimmy sat down next to the recruit and started to hack off a couple of slices of bread according to the French way of doing it. He gave him a slice.

"Slap some of this *confiture* on it," pointing to a tin of jam. "You won't mind if I call you O. D., will you?"

"No; but what makes you want to call me that? My right name's William G. Preston."

"Damn glad to know you, Bill," said Jimmy, shooting out his right hand; "but about this O. D. stuff?"

"What's that gold stripe on your sleeve for?" gasped Bill. "Have you been over here six months?" was the amazing question.

"*Oui,* but that's a wound stripe on the right sleeve—this is the sleeve for service chevrons," and McGee exhibited two greasy and rumpled service chevrons.

Bill gasped a second time. "Why, you've

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been here twelve months. You must have come over on the first troop-ship. Where and how were you wounded?"

The questions were coming too fast for Jimmy McGee. He reached for his gas-mask and tin hat.

"Hold it a minute till I get my wind—all right. I've been here twelve months—I'm sure o' that. No, I didn't come over on the first troop-ship. I sailed over on the first mule-ship—one of those twenty-three-day-at-sea-affairs. In those days we didn't have separate stalls for the mules and men. Everybody and everythin' *cushayed* together down in the hold—except the officers, of course."

"I came over in eight days, and on a big liner— A mule-ship—uuggh!" shuddered William G. Preston, soon to be regenerated under the name of O. D. "But where did you get wounded, and how?"

"I got it in the calf of the leg—fragment from high explosive that the Heinies were rainin' down the night we staged a battle at Seicheprey—first fight of the *guerre* for the Americans, you know," asserted McGee, solemnly. "I only got a little tear in the muscle. Poor old Gordon, my pal, he got his left shoulder and part of his head torn off.

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He died quick, though; didn't suffer much. They gave his folks the D. S. C., as he did some big hero stuff. But that ain't gettin' Frank much," soliloquized the veteran of Seicheprey, reminiscently.

Jimmy saw that Preston was getting too interested and might ask for a story about the war, so he directed traffic in another direction.

"You didn't give me a chance to tell you why I want to call you O. D. Now, you see, we call anything that is regulation, red tape, and all that kind of stuff, O. D.—just a sort of nickname. When I first saw you I thought you was a soldier out of the drill-regulation book or a model for some magazine artist. You see, you're all made up accordin' to the blue-print. Carry your blankets just so; wear your cap at a right slant; got your blouse buttoned up. Hell fire! you're O. D.-lookin', that's all. You're the first of that kind I've seen in a mighty long time, so I'm going to call you O. D. . . . . From now on you're O. D. . . . . *Compree?*"

"Have it your way. What's your name?" asked O. D.

"McGee. Jimmy, most of the gang calls me. Do the same."

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"All right, Jimmy."

"You say you're a replacement?"

"Yes. I arrived in Bar-le-Duc yesterday with a detail and got separated from it. The A. P. M. told me to take this road and keep on going until I located my regiment," explained O. D.

"Got lost, myself, last night," admitted Jimmy. "What outfit are you goin' to?"

"The One Hundred and Third Field Artillery. What division is that?" O. D.'s question was drowned under Jimmy's whoop.

"Well, I'm a son-of-a-gun! That's my own outfit—Twenty-sixth, Yankee Division, of course," shouted McGee as he slapped O. D. across his shoulders. "What the hell do you know about that! I'll get you assigned to my battery. Shake, old man, we'll fight the rest of this *guerre* together."

Jimmy's words, and the bread and jam that the Yankee Division V handed out, did a lot to send the spirits of O. D. shooting up the ladder of hope. Perhaps the war and the front wasn't going to be so terrible, after all he had read about it. Surely not, if it had a bunch of fellows up there like Jimmy McGee, thought O. D.

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"Gosh, I was hungry! This stuff is saving my life," admitted O. D., gladly, as he left trailing evidence of the *confiture* around the corners of his lips. "Since I got lost from my detail last night I haven't had a thing to eat. . . . . I can't talk this French, so I was out of luck for breakfast. I was just thinking about breaking into this stuff"—and he showed his emergency rations of "corned willy" and hardtack—"but the officer told me that I was not to touch them unless it was a case of absolute emergency," concluded O. D.

"*Bon—très-beans!* Take his advice, boy: never touch that stuff unless you are up against it mighty hard. Just a little of that embalmed mule will kill any good man. Guess my stomach got used to it, as I've been eatin' it for damn near six months straight. I'll get us a regular feed when we hit a village tonight. Leave it to me."

"Can you talk this lingo?" asked O. D., as if it were beyond possibilities to juggle the language of the French around on an American tongue.

"*Oui,* not *beaucoup. Cum see—cum saw,*" he replied, indicating a very little bit by his hands. "But I can *parley* enough to get a

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feed and a place to *cushay*. You know *cushay* means sleep and *monjay* means eat. That's about all you got to know. And *combien*—that's how much. They'll tell you that *toot sweet.*"

"How the dickens do I get a drink of water?—I'm about dying of thirst. Haven't had a drop of water in three days, since we left the replacement camp."

"Oh, my God, man! You're in the wrong place to get water. The French don't use that stuff at all. They think we're nuts when we ask for water to drink. You got to get used to that vinegar that they call *van blanc* or *van rouge*. Here, take a swig of this stuff." Jimmy unscrewed the cork from his French canteen and offered it to O. D.

"What's in it?"

"Oh, some of their old, rotten *van rouge*—red wine, you know. But it's better than nothin'."

O. D. took a swallow, made a hard face and let a little more go down, then he handed it back with the remark that it was sour.

"*Oui*, but *say la guerre*. Gotta get used to that stuff, I guess," and he nearly drained the canteen. "Smoke?" he asked, pulling out a package of bruised Lucky Strikes.

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"No, thanks."

"You'll get the habit after you've been up with us awhile. Nothin' like a cigarette, boy, in them damp dugouts when you're waitin' for some party to come off."

After the old blue smoke began to issue from his mouth and nostrils Jimmy felt a bit talkative.

"So you goin' to be an artilleryman, eh?"

"Yes; but the funny thing is that I'm an infantryman—that is, they trained me in that kind of stuff. I never was on a horse in my life. Never saw a real cannon, either," answered O. D.

"Can that stuff. You don't need to know anythin' about ridin' a horse in this man's army. I joined the artillery to keep from walkin' and I've been walkin' most of the time since I enlisted. We never saw a cannon, except those pea-shooters we had back in the States, until we hit France. Just goes to show how this army's bein' run. They send you up to the artillery and you were trained for infantry. Soon they'll be sendin' up submarine-chasers for caissons," declared McGee.

"Say, Jimmy, wish you'd tell me something

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about the front, so I'll know how to act when I get there," pleaded O. D.

"Ah, forget that front idea. You'll never know the difference—unless, of course, you get a fistfull of shrapnel in the face or a bellyful of gas. Course, that makes it different."

"Shrapnel! Gas! Gee, those are bad actors up there, I heard. Is it raining shrapnel all the time, and does the gas come over every day, or what?" asked O. D. kind of hopelessly.

"No, it ain't nothin' like that, O. D. There ain't no flags flyin' or music playin' when the boys go over the top, either. You're liable to get a down-pour of shrapnel, a shell-burst, or a bunch of gas any old time. There's no set rules for the way that stuff comes over—sorta like goin' to business every day after you get used to it. A man gets accustomed to stayin' up all night and jugglin' ninety-five pound shells, firin' a piece, or rammin' bayonets in Boche pigs. The hunger and cold is about the worst thing. You'll drift into the stuff easy enough," consoled the Yank.

"Some time, when you get a chance, will

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you tell me about some of your experiences in the war?"

"*Oui*—when I get time, some day," promised Jimmy. "Well, are you set for another little hike? Guess it's about three bells. We can make 'bout seven kilometers before dark and we'll look for a *chambre*—that's a room in French; then we'll *monjay* and *cushay*. It'll never do to hit a town after dark. You're out of luck in this country to find a room or anything once the sun goes down. They never make a light on account of Boche planes. Might as well be in a barren desert as get into a French town after nightfall."

"I'm ready," answered O. D., buckling up his harness and rising.

"It takes me quite a bit of time to get all of this junk on me," apologized McGee, as he began throwing *musettes* over his shoulders and buckling on belts and other stuff. O. D. gave him a hand and pretty soon Jimmy McGee was once more arrayed in all the glory of a front-line veteran.

"Guess we'll hang onto this hunk of *du pan*. It's mighty hard to get bread in these French places," said McGee, falling into the old stride that he patronized when on the stem in France.

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II

"AVEY VOUS DE CHAMBRE?"

JIMMY McGEE and O. D., alias William G. Preston, made a great contrast as they plodded up and down hill along the tree-lined route over which passed in 1914 the stream of Paris taxicabs that brought French poilus to the heights of Verdun in time for Papa Joffre to stop the mad advance of the Prussians.

To the uninitiated, O. D., with his regulation pack and uniform equipment, would most likely have been immediately picked for the better soldier of the two. Jimmy McGee, habitué of the ragged battle-lines, and showing the wear and tear of fighting in everything about him, save his eyes, would have been dubbed a slouch. Which just goes to prove how different are the standards of measurements and worth that obtain at the front and in the S. O. S. Everything and everybody at the front is discounted until nothing but naked realities show. There is

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no chance for the superficial to flourish in the trenches and gun positions.

The pair had made about three kilometers when the sound of an approaching auto warned Jimmy McGee to take to the bushes. He lost no time in getting off the road. O. D. followed him with the statement that he believed it was a general's limousine coming.

"Let it come—we don't need to see it. Just sit down and look the other way. No use tryin' to break our arms with that salutin' stuff," was the reply.

Both men sat down facing the woods. There was a sound of tires scraping the road, under pressure of quickly applied brakes. A door opened and slammed shut.

"What outfit are you men from?" The question was asked in a heavy, steady voice.

McGee and O. D. stood up and faced about to find themselves confronted by a major-general. They saluted. McGee spoke up.

"Twenty-sixth Division, sir."

"What are you doing straggling along this road?" asked the general.

"Just returnin' to our outfits from the hospital, sir," lied McGee, with a feeling of glory.

"All right, men."

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The man with two stars on his shoulders stepped back into the warmth and luxury of his chugging motor and was off in a swirl of dust that nearly choked the two soldiers. McGee caught himself in the act of reaching for his old, battle-scarred gas-mask.

"Gee! he was a major-general," declared O. D. in an awed voice; "did you see the two stars on his straps?" gasped the newcomer to Jimmy's hunting-grounds.

"*Oui,* I noticed them all right, but they didn't mean nothin' to me. Generals don't count much up there," pointing in the general direction of the front. "We see plenty of other things that's more interestin'. Course, you know, I generally salute officers from brigadier-generals up—that is, when they see me first; but you get used to havin' 'em around you," was Jimmy's rejoinder.

"First time I ever had a general speak to me," admitted O. D.

"Hell afire! I've had a dozen of 'em talk to me. Old General Edwards—he's our boss, you know, and some boy at that, too—gave me an awful bawlin'-out one day on a hike when he caught me ridin' on the rollin' kitchen. Then another time he came into my dug-out one day and told me that the C. O.

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had said something good about a fool stunt I pulled one night when our lines went down and we kept up communication durin' the bombardment and attack. Said he'd cite me, or somethin' like that, but I never bothered to find out much about the business. Believe me, Edwards is the kind of man this army needs with a general's stars on. He gets right in the old *guerre*. Some of 'em fight the war back in towns that the Boches have agreed not to shell. Say, by the way, ever see Pershing down in the S. O. S.?" asked Jimmy, as he got started under way again.

"Yes, once, when some French general gave him a medal or something. It was quite a ceremony," replied his new companion.

"What did he look like? Kinda curious, as I ain't seen him yet."

"Do you mean that you are right at the front and never see the general?" The question was crowded with incredulity.

"Been on every front the Americans ever fought on, except the British lines, and never seen Pershing yet," maintained McGee.

"Whee-ew! I thought that he was at the front all of the time leading the troops," said O. D.

"No that Civil War stuff ain't much in

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this *guerre.* Generals are like the flags and bands at the time we go over—they ain't there, as a rule," informed the man who knew about those things.

"Three kilometers to Issoncourt, according to that mile-stone," said O. D. after they had hiked about four more kilos.

"Don't believe those things. Next one will say seven kilometers to Issoncourt. That's the way they build those things in this country. You 'ain't arrived over here until you get there."

"Looks like a nice town over yonder." O. D. illustrated his words by pointing to the cluster of red roofs that glared in the afternoon sunlight.

"Looks—but that's all. They're all alike. At a distance you think these darn French villages are the cat's knee-knuckles, so to speak, but when you get in them it's the same old stuff—a bunch of old, moss-covered buildings standin' around a church that's big enough for an Irish parish in a big New York City precinct. A gang of cows in the street; an army of sheep and goats runnin' in and out of front doors; a few hungry-looking dogs; *beaucoup* manure smoking in front of every door; some old men and

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women clatterin' up and down in those wooden shoes—and you've got the best French village I ever stayed in. I'd rather pass the rest of my life in Yulee, Florida, than spend three months in one of these places durin' peace-times. There's a few trains pass through Yulee, and you get a newspaper once in a while; but in these French dumps the biggest excitement is that old village crier with his drum and line of talk that the inhabitants can't *compree,* or a two-year-old newspaper posted up on the city hall, or *Mairie,* as they call it. I'm off 'em for life."

It was only four o'clock when the pair reached Issoncourt, but already the shades of oncoming night had started to curtain the early autumn day with a sort of purple haze that soon became a regular night mist.

"Guess we'll camp here for the night," was Jimmy's decision, as he noted the signs of night coming.

Issoncourt had been attached to the sides of the main Verdun road, and everything that the town owned was in plain view from the middle of the street, or *Grande Rue,* as the villagers called the roadway.

"Looks like there might be a *chambre* in

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that house. We'll reconnoiter a bit for a place to *cushay,*" and Jimmy started toward what he thought was the best-looking house on the street.

Just as they reached the rough stone steps, after wading through the usual three feet of mud, a young colt came tearing through a barn door and nearly sent O. D. down for the count. Jimmy tapped at the door.

"*Entrez,*" called a woman's voice.

McGee pushed the door in and both men stepped into the room. It was the same old stuff to Jimmy. The room was big and contained two beds that were built into the walls and canopied over with some kind of red curtain. A rickety table with a half-emptied bottle of *vin rouge* on it stood in the center of the room. There was the usual number of chickens passing in and out to the barn. Several cats lounged about the great open fireplace that was bare of fire, except for a few pieces of smoking things that looked like grape-vines. A dog got up somewhere in the darkness and shook himself back to life. The woman who had told them to enter was not in sight.

Suddenly the sound of wooden shoes rattling over stones announced the approach of

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some one. A woman came in from the barn carrying an apron full of potatoes and greens. A small army of chickens followed at a respectful distance. The woman was of medium height, kind of pudgy around the gills and places where a corset should have been. Her hands were red and big enough to handle any one-hundred-and-sixty-pound man. Of course, she wasn't good-looking or particularly ugly, just an ordinary peasant face.

"*Que désirez-vous, Messieurs?*" (What will you have, messieurs?)

"Eh—*bonjour, madame,*" began Jimmy, unsteadily. "*Avey vouse de chambre for comrade* and *moi?*"

The woman cocked her ear to get the drift. "*Chambre—pour coucher?*" she asked.

"Ah, *oui, madame,*" assured Jimmy, picking up courage.

The woman dropped her load of potatoes and greens on the floor, kicked off the wooden boats, and, telling them to follow her, waddled into the next and only room in the house.

"*Voilà!*" (There), she exclaimed, pointing to a bed that was at least seven feet high.

"*Bon—tres-beans, madame,*" to the woman. Then Jimmy turned to O. D.: "We may need

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a step-ladder to get in and a pulley to get us out; but *say la guerre.* It's a hundred times better than a hay-loft."

"Sure," said O. D., enthusiastically.

"Madame, monjay ici?" was Jimmy's next effort.

"Mais, messieurs, je n'ai rien! Trés-difficile d'obtenir quoi que ce soit depuis la guerre! Figuerez-vous, une livre de sucre pour une personne par mois! Et du pain! O là là! C'est terrible, vous comprenz? (Oh, messieurs, I have very little. Too difficult to get things since the war started. One pound of sugar a person for a month, a ration of bread. It's terrible, you understand?), answered the woman, evasively.

"Oui, madame, compree; but *comrade, moi,* no *monjay. Beaucoup hungry. Beaucoup fatigue. Compree?"* questioned McGee, tapping his stomach as if it were an empty bag.

"Oui," answered the *madame,* solemnly.

"Omelette, pom du tear fritz, trey-bon vous, serve comrade, moi, s'il vous plate." Jimmy did his darnest to tell her what he was thinking.

She understood him after the fashion of the French people who had been near American soldiers before. Most of the peasants in

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the regions where many American soldiers were located soon learned to speak their native French just as brokenly as the Americans. It was necessary to do so in order that the likes of Jimmy McGee might *compree* just a little bit.

After much puffing and running around, the woman finally set a table for her hungry guests.. A fifteen-egg omelet, *beaucoup* French-fried potatoes, what was left of Jimmy's bread, a dish of white cheese, and a tall bottle of wine awaited the offensive of the two Americans.

"Ah, *madame,*" said McGee, licking his chops, "I'll say that's the *darb*——"

"*Qu'est-ce qu'il dit?*" (What did you say?)

"Oh, I said its mighty *bon—beaucoup monjay,* you *compree moi?*"

The peasant woman smiled at him as if she understood, and Jimmy made a dive into the middle of the big yellow omelet.

"Gee, this is the best feed I've sat down to in a long, long time," admitted O. D. as he piled the brown potatoes knee-deep in his plate. "Wish I could speak French like you do, I'd be able to keep from starving."

"Oh, I don't *parley* much, just enough to get along. Course, I never have any time

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to study. If we get a chance I'll teach you some of the stuff."

"Thanks. Say, wonder if you could get her to give me a drink of water. I'll pass away with this thirst."

"Here, take a glass of the *vim rouge*. It may be better than the stuff I had in my canteen," offered Jimmy.

"No, believe I'd rather have the water, if you can get it without too much trouble."

"None t'all. Wait 'till the madame blows in again; I'll see what we can do."

"*Madame, avey vous der low?*" asked Jimmy, hoping that she would get his meaning.

"*Der low,*" repeated the woman, lost for a moment. "*Der low,*" again. This time with great wondering, "*Pas compris, monsieur.*"

"*Cum see, cum saw,*" explained McGee, raising an empty glass to his lips.

"*Oh, pardon, monsieur, pardon, oui, tout de suite.*" She hurried over to the wall and pulled a part of it out, found a cupboard where nobody else would have ever dreamed there was one, and drew forth a glass. She brought the glass to Jimmy and gave it to him.

"She didn't get me," groaned Jimmy. "Thought I wanted another glass, just like a

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Frog." Then to the woman, "*Madame, compree low, der low,* drink, you *savvy?*" he floundered deeper.

The woman shook her head while McGee scanned the room in search of a pump or something by which he might readily explain his desire. There was nothing in sight to help him. He turned again to the waiting woman.

"*Madame, moi comrade*—no *van rouge*—no *pas bon* for *comrade. Kisskesay, der low,* water, in *Fransay?*" Jimmy was at the limit of his resources.

"Never mind, old man, I'll go without it," said O. D., coming to the rescue.

"*Der low, der low,*" muttered the woman shaking her head uncomprehendingly and pronouncing the word just as Jimmy had done. Suddenly a light flashed across her stolid features.

"*De l'eau, vous dites.*" (Water you said.)

"*Oui, Oui, madame.*"

"*Ah, mon Dieu, de l'eau, je comprends,*" and she dashed out of doors with a small bucket.

"At last she gets it—some battlin', though. These doggone French people can't *compree* this water stuff. Maybe if they'd drink more

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water the war'd be won faster. But I'm getting just like 'em—haven't had any water in four days myself now. Guess I'll tank up to-night."

Madame returned with the water and immediately poured it all in a basin, grabbed some soap and a towel and brought the whole outfit over to Jimmy.

"Voilà!" she exclaimed as if the *guerre* was won.

Jimmy looked at the basin, the soap and towel. Then he looked long and hard at O. D. The woman stood fast, regarding them both, feeling suddenly guilty of having sinned again.

"Corporal of the guard, relief, post number one," shouted Jimmy. "Can you beat that, wouldn't it drive a man nuts? I ask for a drink of water and the woman insists that I wash. No use, O. D." Then to the woman, *"Madame, pas wash, cum saw,"* and he lifted the glass to his lips for the second time.

"Quoi? Boire de l'eau? Impossible! ! Buvez donc du vin! quelle race! Eh! mon Dieu! ils bovient de l'eau!" (What! you want water to drink. Impossible. Drink the red wine. What people—what people! My

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God! they drink water), exclaimed the mystified woman, and she nearly went into fits.

"*Oui, madame,*" insisted Jimmy, raising the glass up and down as if to convince her by that action of the sincerity of his words and meaning.

"*Comme vous voulent, messieurs!*" (As you will then, messieurs), answered madame, and she went out for more water.

Just as the boys were hitting the cheese or *fromage* course as Jimmy insisted on calling it, the man of the house, or *patron,* as madame called him, blew in. He was nothing more and nothing less than a grizzled old poilu rigged up in civilian clothes.

"*Bon swoir, messieurs,*" was his hearty greeting.

"*Bonjour, monsieur,*" responded Jimmy, rising to shake his hand.

"*Bonne mangee?*" asked the Frenchman, pointing to the table.

"*Oui . . . trey-bien,*" declared McGee, and he let out two notches in his belt to prove that he was well fed.

The old man dragged up a chair and made believe he was going to roll a cigarette. Jimmy saw the act and got wise.

"Here, have a regular cigarette," he said,

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extending a pack of Piedmonts to the *patron.*

"*Merci. Merci, monsieur.*"

"Take 'em all. I can get more. Suppose we ain't too near the front yet for the Y. M. C. A."

"*Ah, monsieur, vous êtes trés-gentil, très bon.*" (Ah, sir, you are very nice, very kind.)

"Not at all."

Once the cigarette was lighted, the man of the house waddled over to the cupboard and extracted a long dark bottle. He came back to the table, measured out four glasses of brownish-looking stuff and handed them around. He touched his own against every one else's and shouted:

"*Vive l'Amérique!*"

"*Vive la France!*" shouted Jimmy.

The old cognac went down at a swallow. Everyone smacked their lips except O. D. He busied himself brushing away two big tears that filled his eyes.

"*Bon,*" grunted the Frenchman.

"*Ah, oui,*" answered Jimmy, patting his stomach.

"*Mangee,*" said the husband. He sat down with his wife to a meal of soup, with bread floating around in it, a dish of boiled potatoes, bread, cheese, and wine.

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"Want to show you something, Jimmy," said O. D., rising and getting an envelope out of his blouse. He spread a lot of pictures in front of Jimmy.

"That's mother, in her little rose-garden. This is Mary, always loved flowers, too. See she's hiding behind some tall lilies, just so you can see her face."

"Gee, I can't tell the difference between Mary and the lilies," interrupted Jimmy, admiringly, as he looked upon the picture of Mary's sweet, girlish face. "Golly! it must be pippin stuff to have a sister like that."

"Here's some more of Mary, taken on the front stoop and one at the shore when I took her down there to go swimming one hot day."

Jimmy was so absorbed looking at Mary's pictures that he didn't hear the madame's inquisitive question.

"*Fiancée, fiancée?*" she asked, pointing to Mary's photo.

"No," answered Jimmy at last, "sister, *compree? Sœur* to *comrade,*" pointing to O. D., who nodded his head in affirmation.

The snap of Mary taken on the beach fascinated Jimmy. He decided it should belong to him. When O. D. was not watching, the Yank who never let Boche shells or gas worry

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him swept the picture under his blouse with a strange feeling of unrest running through his body and soul.

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III

"THAT MULE WAS A SLACKER"

"JIMMY, tell me how you happened to get in the army?" asked O. D.

"Well, time the *guerre* started I meant to enlist. But it was kinda funny after all just how I came to join this Yankee outfit," admitted McGee.

"How's that?"

"Back in the old States I used to be a little two-by-four newspaper man 'round New York —scribbled a few lines about murders, scandals, subway accidents, and wrote up a lot of stuff 'bout people who pulled wild stunts to get their names in print. Ever since I left my home down in Florida five years ago, after my folks all died and I was alone in this so-called cruel world, I had a hankering for adventure. Used to travel 'round quite a bit, and finally landed in New York as a cub reporter. Stayed there awhile and got so I could make my own livin' as a newspaper man. Then the war started.

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"Naturally I wanted to go to France *toot sweet.* Always was kinda romantic—so much so till I thought seriously of goin' into the movies once or twice—that along with the adventure-bug and natural-born desire to take a good crack at them dirty Heinies sent me up to a recruitin'-station to get some dope about joinin' the army.

"About that time I got a telegram to beat it for Providence. A friend of mine who was a captain in the Coast Artillery said that he had a good job in the army for me. I shot over to Providence and went down to the fort where the captain's outfit was located. The job hadn't come through when I arrived, so while waitin' I became correspondent for *The Providence Journal.*

"Three months passed and the job—I was to be sergeant-major of the post, with promise of an early commission—hadn't materialized. I got mighty itchy to be a soldier. Folks used to look at me and wonder why I wasn't wearin' khaki instead of white flannels and silk shirts, so I thought, anyhow.

"Finally the job came through—I was to enlist on August eleventh. The night before I started down to Providence to see some friends and say *au revoir.* On the way I ran

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into a column of field artillery headed for a railroad station.

"Where you fellows goin'? I asked.

"To France," answered a little corporal.

"To France, says I to myself a couple of times, and I'm going to take a plush-lined job down at a Coast Artillery fort. Never do it. Sure enough two hours later, me, my white flannels, silk shirt, and dinky Panama was on board a flat ridin' toward Boxford, Massachusetts.

"That night I *cushayed* on the ground with a horse-blanket for coverin'. Great God! Thought I'd freeze to death before the bugle blew to quit *cushayin'*. Next morning' I was sworn in. For three days I drilled, dressed up in my white pants and seashore outfit. They didn't have a uniform big enough for me. Gee, it was funny for everybody but me. Finally I got a pair of breeches that wouldn't split everytime I tried to get in 'em.

"We got *beaucoup* of that squad's east and double-time stuff there. Then came an order for my battalion to *partee* for Newport News, Virginia.

"Down there they put us doin' guard duty over a few miles of wild horses and hungry mules. Stayed there a month and a half.

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Then we got orders. That's how I got in this man's army," concluded Jimmy.

"Gee, you're the most interesting fellow I ever met. Don't quit now. How did you come across?"

"One Saturday afternoon me, George Neil, and Sundberg was sittin' in a theater watchin' some guys fall in and out of stale slapstick stuff when a gink, the manager, I guess, blew out on the stage between acts and said that all men in the One Hundred and Third Field Artillery must report *toot sweet* in front of the house."

"*Monsieur, voulez-vous coucher maintenant?*" (Will you sleep now?) interrupted the madame.

"*Oui,*" replied Jimmy, making a move to get up.

"*Peu importe! Restez donc près du feu!*" (It does not make any difference. Stay by the fire if you are not ready to go.)

"*Merci, madame,*" and Jimmy sat down again.

The old man was jerked out of his snoring slumber. With little less ado than to shake off his slippers and take off his coat the old fellow climbed into bed, pants, cap, and everything else on. His spouse went ahead with

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her preparations for sleep as if the two Americans had been miles away.

"Just like these people. They don't give a darn for any one," explained Jimmy as he started to scratch around his neck and chest. "Damn these cooties, they always get restless when I stay near a hot fire long." He pushed farther away from the fireplace and put a cigarette to his lips.

"Go on, Jimmy, with your story. You were told to leave the house—and what then?" begged O. D.

"Well, I reported in front of the theater and a sergeant grabs me and says, 'Git in that truck and go to camp.' 'What the hell's up?' I asked. 'Never mind, you'll find out soon enough,' snaps out the sergeant.

"When we hit the camp half of the battery was lined up gettin' inspected and the other half was fallin' all over each other, rollin' up blankets or cussin' the supply sergeant because he wouldn't issue stuff that had been swiped or lost. Tacks McLoughlin, who used to *cushay* next to me in the tent, told me that my detail was goin' to France *toot sweet.*

"You can imagine that the news kind of excited me just a litte, 'cause I was green

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to real excitement in those days. I started to make up my own roll, but when it came time to strap it up I found that I was tyin' up my own arm inside the roll, so had to unwind the whole darn thing. Finally I got all set and was inspected. Nobody tried to stop me from goin', so I guess I was thought able and fit. *Toot sweet* after we *monjayed* a rotten supper of goolash—some meal to hand a gang about to come to this God-forsaken country—the gang started bettin' like a bunch of wild men at a horse-race.

"'Bet we'll get torpedoed,' shouted one crape-hanger. 'Ten to one we'll be at the front in two months,' said Sundberg, goin' wild. I told him to lay dead on that stuff. I knew there wasn't much chance of 'em sendin' a gang of men who didn't know a halter-shank from the breech-block of a piece to the front right away. One gink wanted to bet me that he'd get hit before me. I listened to the bull just to keep my excitement down.

"The trucks rolled up about eight bells and we all piled in on top of one another and started for the ship. It didn't take long to get down to the pier and we were loaded on like a bunch of cattle.

"We just followed the man in front of us

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up and down, in and around all of the decks on that cussed boat until, at last, somebody found the way down to what they had rigged up as our quarters. Time I stuck my nose down that companionway I knew that somethin' was wrong—smelled just like the horse and mule corrals that we had been guardin'. Finally I landed on the last deck, which was at least fifty feet below daylight, and reached my bunk, which was jammed up close to the rear of another mule—I mean a mule's stall. I swore like a sailor and some funny guy who knew a little bit of French bawled out, *'Say la guerre,'* which I understand pretty well now, even if I didn't know what he was talkin' about then.

"Well, O. D., you know a mule don't smell like a flower-garden and when you put sixty mules and fifty men in a rat-hole, 'way below fresh air and daylight, there ain't goin' to be any perfumery-shop made by doin' so. Boy, that was one hell of a night. Gas ain't in it with the fumes that filled that bunking-place. When I woke up in the mornin' my old bean was so heavy I thought I was wearin' a cast-iron derby. I believe I'd have suffocated if it wasn't for a trick that some wise bird played on Johnson, who *cushayed* in the bunk

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above. You see, our tier of torture-racks was right below one of those air-funnels, or whatever you call them things on ships that look like big question-marks. 'Bout midnight the funny guy lets a whole bucket of cold water go down that funnel. Course Johnny got most of it in the stomach, but I got enough to kinda revive me.

"Soon as I woke up I thought we was out to sea. I felt sick enough to be in the middle of the ocean, but some guy who had been up on deck hollered down that we hadn't moved a foot from the dock. Sundberg, who had been talkin' about the motion of the boat, had to crawl under a bunk after that.

"The first day on the boat was enough to make me believe that we would all be starved to death before gettin' to France. They had a Chinese steward named Yung Kow, and that slant-eyed chink hid most of the stuff we were supposed to eat.

"His parents would have turned in their grave if they only knew how well his name fitted him. Too bad pig ain't a Chinese word. Young pig would have been better than Yung Kow. The third night out we caught him and three more almond-eyed cooks storin' the

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stuff down in a hold. Didn't do a thing but turn the deck hose on the crew of 'em.

"Before we started loadin' them wild jackasses and horses on I had a chance to pike the tub off that was to take us across. It was an old Hawaiian line freighter named the *Panaman*. Seemed to be a fair-looking ship—but none too big for nine hundred mules, ninety-nine horses, and two hundred men.

"I was talkin' to a cannibal named Punkjaw who had been a sailor ever since he quit eatin' people four years before. He couldn't speak much English, but could sputter some words in Spanish, and as I took a correspondence course in that lingo I got about every tenth word. Along came Bill O'Rourke, actin' top-kicker, and tells me to haul it down on the dock and lead a few mules aboard. I dragged along and started to do as he said.

"But listen here, O. D., you know a mule is one of them persons a man can't lead any too easy. The first long-eared brat that I got didn't have no intention of goin' to France—not if he could help it. I took the halter-shank and went as far up that gangway as the slack of my rope let me. Then I stopped. A mule, 'specially these army ones, is strong-

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er than most men. That fellow I had was a regular Goliath. He just stood there like a statue. Well, I pulled and cussed about ten minutes and got a nigger-boy to wallop that brute over the hind with a thick plank. Nothin' doin'.

"That mule was a slacker. He just wasn't goin' to France and fight. You know how aggravatin' a top-sergeant, more so an actin' one, can be. 'Git on that rope and drag your mule up; you're holdin' up the ship,' bawls O'Rourke. Can you imagine that stuff from a man like O'Rourke, who had spent quite a bit o' time with mules and knew their tricks. 'Git on the rope yourself,' I shot back. See, I'd only been in the army a little time and a top-sergeant didn't seem like no tin god to me.

"Course O'Rourke was sore as a boil. But he couldn't do nothin'. We got a detail at the head and stern of that critter and when somebody counted three everybody yanked and pushed. The damn mule stood fast, but Berny Garrity and another guy went overboard while several others landed on different bales of cotton nearby. We got some coons to help us. Them niggers shouted like madmen in a side-show. But nothin' didin',

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Finally we hooked that fool mule onto a pulley with *beaucoup* ropes and hauled him aboard. It was a battle to get that gink in his stall.

"The ship was loaded and ready to start to France at three bells that afternoon. 'Bout four we pulled up the anchor and got under way. When we got so far out into the ocean that shore was just like a low cloud in the west I said, 'Good-by, old America.' Thought I'd never see the United States for many moons again. Can you imagine us wakin' up the next mornin' in plain sight of Jersey coast? We did—and went into New York Harbor for a convoy.

"After waitin' thirty-six hours they finally got all of the tubs in a line that was to go across with us. I never saw such a fleet of fishin'-smacks and whalers in all my life. There wasn't one that could make over seven miles an hour, except ourselves, as we soon found out.

"The Statue of Liberty was about the last friend I seen as we pulled out of New York and hit for the briny. That night we were out to sea for fair and the *Panaman* did some stunts that would make a good Holy Roller feel ashamed.

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"Can't say that our trip was as bad as it might have been. Course I got out of that hole they stuck us in for sleepin'-quarters and made a bunk upon the second hatch, 'midships. Sundberg and I slept together there and we used to rope ourselves down at night to keep from rollin' overboard. The eatin' was rotten for us, but the mules and horses ate pretty fair, that is, all but mine. I had eighteen soft-brained, long-eared mules to feed, and they got so damn mean until they would bite my back when I turned 'round to pick up hay. So I starved 'em a few times just to show 'em who was runnin' their little boardin'-house.

"There wasn't any amusements on that boat. Not even a checker-board or a game of tiddledy-de-winks. In that case we had to shoot crap quite a bit. Generally the whole outfit includin' the crew, galley hounds, and even Punkjaw, shot all mornin' long and after dinner we *encored* until dark. The games got so high and interestin' until the ship's officers and some army lieutenants got a few hands in. That's how I met Lindsey, the third engineer. He and I got chummy over a couple of good hands that ran for me almost half an hour and first thing I knew I had

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fixed to sleep in his stateroom on the little sofa thing in there.

" 'Bout that time I made friends with Julius. He served the captain's mess and used to hand me in a feed every meal through the port-hole. Talk about good *monjayin'*. Boy, them was the days when a dish of ham and eggs looked like a mess-kit full of 'corn willy.' Them officers used to get chicken almost every meal. Course I *monjayed* just as good as they did when that chink steward didn't have his beads on Julius.

"The only ceremonies that took place on board was funerals. We had quite a few mules die, and of course there wasn't much use in carryin' them along like that. A dead mule ain't much account hitched up to a ration cart or a rollin' kitchen. So we hauled 'em up and let 'em slide overboard. There was a couple of guys who hollered about doin' that, as they said German submarines might track us or find out that there was boats around if they saw dead mules floatin' on the ocean. But I told those fellows that it would be a darn sight easier to locate us if we kept the mules on board than if we threw 'em over.

"After fifteen days of rollin' and pitchin' we sneaked into the danger zone, as that place

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was called where there was supposed to be *beaucoup* U-boats. Funny thing, but you never heard a word 'bout submarines until we hit the zone. Then the only thing said was that we might have to swim a good deal if we got hit, as most of the boats were not seaworthy. Still we kept on drillin' with them just as if they were good enough to get in if the ship got torpedoed.

"Our third day in the zone, after the little toy-boats, or destroyers as they called them, bobbed up, gave us a little fun. One of the guys on watch—that's the same thing as guard in this man's army—swore he saw a submarine on the starboard railin' or somethin' like that. Everybody rushed to that side of the ship until we like to have tipped over. You might think that we would have had sense enough, knowin' it was a German submarine, to have ducked behind something so as to get out of the way of anythin' that the Dutchmen would shoot over. But no, just like Americans, they had to run out and see what was goin' on.

"The captain had 'em blow the bugle to call everybody, 'cept the gunners and crew, to the life-boats. 'Bout the time that the racket started Samson and me was just gettin'

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away with a big pan full of bread-puddin' that the chinks and Japs had made for their own dinner. I heard 'em yellin', 'Submarine, submarine!' But hell, I didn't want to lose that puddin', not after gettin' away so clean, so Samson and I ran down the ladder that goes from the smokestack room down to the hold and hid the stuff. When I got upstairs—I mean on deck again—the bow-gun crew had a gun trained on the German and banged away once or twice. Some of the fellows swear that they saw the wake of a torpedo 'way behind us as if the Boche had fell short by a good many yards. But guess they was seein' things.

"That was the last fun we had until we hit the harbor of Brest after bein' at sea twenty-three days. A Frenchman pilot got on aboard. Believe me it was a hell of a funny thing—he couldn't speak a word of English and none of the officers could say a line of French. In them days I was just as bad as the officers as I couldn't even say good mornin' or ask for a drink of water in the Frog stuff. They got a buck private by the name of St. Gabriel or somethin' like that who was a French Canuck to parley for them. That was one day that the privates had the officers

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at parade rest. Gabriel was the only man that knew what was up beside the pilot, and they had each other bluffed I believe. Well, buddy, that's how I got to this sunny France business. Sunny! We ain't had two whole clear days since we hit the country." Jimmy McGee started running his hand under his shirt and scratched away in a professional manner.

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IV

"SUNNY FRANCE!"

"YOU sure had a tough time getting here, Jimmy, compared to me. I came over on an old ocean liner. We had good clean bunks and three settings at table. There were regular bill o' fares and live waiters. Only took eight days to come over. What was your first impression of France and where did you land at Brest?" O. D.'s brown eyes didn't show a bit of sleepiness and his ears were cocked for every word that Jimmy McGee was willing to spill.

"Hell, no—not at Brest, that must have been a good town in them days. There was a rule made at the beginning of the war not to give this division anything good. We stayed in Brest that night and started for St. Nazaire *toot sweet* the next day. God help anybody, even the M. P.'s who had to fight the *guerre* in St. Nazaire. That town is the first place the Lord made and He forgot about

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it ten minutes after putting it up. It's worse than the town old Bill Blodgett comes from.

"Well, we got in the harbor there 'bout two o'clock. It was kinda foggy and rainin' off and on. 'Ain't quit since then. Still they call it 'Sunny France.' After a lot of waitin' around they shoved us in the canal locks, and I'm a liar if we didn't go right through the middle of the town. Some of the houses on both sides of the locks looked like twins or else as if they had been pushed apart so as the canal could run through the town.

"Guess the first impression I got was that the Americans was still a new play toy for the French, 'cause there was a gang of kids and people runnin' up and down the docks shoutin' and wavin' to us. Then I began to notice the buildings—whew! They looked old enough to be great-grandfathers to some of those four-hundred-year-old houses down in St. Augustine, Florida. Most of 'em had *Café* or *Van Rouge* written all over them. I never saw so many *cafés* in all my life. Course the French people looked funny as hell to us. Some were all dolled up in fine clothes and others looked as if they would catch cold for want of somethin' to cover them. There was more soldiers walkin' up and down on the

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piers than we had in the whole American army at that time. I thought we must be pretty near the front as there was so many. Some of the Frenchmen wore helmets. That's about all that most of the Frogs have got left now. Never saw so many widows in all my days. Most of the women who was dressed up at all wore black and long veils. They made me think 'bout the war, and I felt kinda good 'cause there wasn't any woman to wear black in case I got knocked off at the front.

"Some Americans, who acted as though they had just bought the town and could end the war with a snap of their fingers, came down to the edge of the locks and began shootin' the bull. Most of the Americans wanted to know how the football games were coming off in the States. We told them we didn't know as they hadn't started good when we left. I had to explain to one guy that we didn't come over on an express and that it took nearly a month to get here. He began tellin' me where we could get our money changed and where the best champagne was and how to do things in general while in France. I asked him if he had been to the front yet and he said, 'Oh no, I'm a receivin'-

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clerk, with the grade of corporal.' 'The hell you are! I though you had been up endin' the war,' says I. But he didn't seem to get my meanin'.

"They kept us on that boat two days. Durin' that time some little French kids who could *parley* a little English rowed out in a tub and sold us *beaucoup van rouge* and *cognac*. About half of the ship got zig-zag *toot sweet*. I thought they'd put us in irons.

"Finally we got marched ashore and through the town to our barracks. Some barracks for a white man I'll say. No bunks. No floor. No stoves. Nothing but a roof and the ground. It comes easy now to *cushay* on a bag of ten-penny nails, but in them days sleepin' on the cold bumpy ground was just as bad as missin' your weekly Saturday bath in the States.

"I'll never forget my first night in France. I got put in the jug. Those damn American M. P.'s of course. Ever since then I ain't had much love for that branch of the service. Course we don't see too much of them up at the front, but they get in a man's way now and then. Seems as though you had to have a pass to be on the streets. As usual I never had any pass, so they grabbed me,

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Samson, Johnson, and Kicky Hull. When we got to the brig we found practically the whole outfit lined up there.

"We had a fair time the first few days. But I had a job tryin to *compree* this foolish-looking French money. Say, O. D., ain't it the worst stuff you ever handled? For one good ten-spot, American dough, I'd give 'em all the *frankers* they ever printed. *Pas bon,* that stuff.

"I met one fine French family in that town. There was the mother, father, and girl. Her name was Suzanne, and, honest, boy, she was a little rose mademoiselle. Pretty and delicate-like, you know, and could speak English in that *bon* way that these janes over here *parley* American after studyin' it. Lots better than you or me can. Suzanne and her people were regular folks. Why, they were almost the same as Americans. Had all kinds of stuff in the house, stoves and pianos, like us, and did mostly as we do, except I never saw them drinking water.

"Well, Suzanne had a *fiancé,* a young French lieutenant, and she was always talkin' about him and how much she loved him. She hated the Germans worse than rats. All Suzanne wanted to do was end the war, have

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her *fiancé* come home and get married. Her people was pretty wealthy for French people. Had a big stationery and athletic-goods store. They sure tried to make life worth while for old Samson and myself. Believe Sammy was a bit stuck on Suzanne, but he never said nothin' 'bout it to me. He could *parley* a little bit, and it used to get me mad as hell to go into a store or any place and have him start that French stuff and talk to the people when I couldn't get a word of the lingo.

"We must have had a reputation as chambermaids for mules, 'cause they put the battery to work in another corral, cleaning it up and feedin' the animals. Sometimes they used to wake us up in the middle of the night and send us down to ships that had just come in so that we could lead the mules up to the corral. That was some job. The mules would be wilder than ever after bein' penned up on a boat so long, and time they'd hit the street they usually started tearin' off. If any of us happened to have hold of them mules at the time, we mostly went with the mule.

"After a month of that kind of work we were sent to Camp Coetquidan to learn how to fight the *guerre* with real cannon. When we got to camp the other batteries had al-

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ready found out how to fire the guns and were blowin' away at anything for a target. It didn't take us long to find out how those six-inch howitzers worked. The French called 'em *sonn sankont-sanks,* which means one hundred and fifty-fives.

"I'll never get in another *guerre* again as long as I live, but if I do get mixed up in another I'll keep clear of France and especially Coetquidan. Rain—mud—mud—rain. All day and all night at that hole. We slept in the barracks that Napoleon and his army used to *cushay* in. No wonder he always had his hand in his shirt. Guess he was scratchin'. No, there wasn't any cooties there. But they had some kind of bed-ticks or ground rats that used to bite us up pretty bad. Bein' about the first fightin' troops over we couldn't expect to have gloves, shower-baths, and warm barracks. The only thing that was issued was *beaucoup* reserve officers.

"I got a pass to be away from camp for two days and went down to a place called Rennes, 'bout thirty-eight kilofloppers from camp. It took six hours to get there on the little narrow-gauge, and I spent all my time down there in a big house where I got a *bain* —that's what the Frogs say for bath—tryin'

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to get clean. Didn't get another *bain* until two months later at the front.

"Saw a lot of Boche prisoners down there. Course we seen quite a few at St. Nazaire, but didn't have a chance to say anything to 'em. They must have knew we was green at this *guerre* stuff, as they asked us for cigarettes and chocolate, and we was fools enough to hand 'em some. Catch me givin' them dirty sausage-meats cigarettes now. *'Caput'* for 'em all, that's what the Frogs say.

"After Christmas passed and we got our first real batch of mail— Say, O. D., I guess you get a bunch of mail from your ma and sis, don't you?" asked Jimmy.

"I've been getting about four letters a week, but guess I'll have to wait until it gets forwarded to me now," acknowledged O. D.

"Mon Dul" was the ejaculation, "four a week. Gosh, you're lucky. Why, I've only got seventeen since I hit this country. Course there's nobody to write me but a few of the boys down at the newspaper office who couldn't pass the physicals——"

"Is that a fact, Jimmy?"

"Oui. Bet your tin hat."

"Don't see how you stand this life without letters."

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"Comes tough at times, 'specially when the other guys gets *beaucoup* letters. Kinda feel like a nobody. But generally somethin' turns up—we start drivin'—or the Boches get some guts and throw a few over. Then there ain't much chance to think about such things." Jimmy spoke as if a few letters could do a great deal toward winning wars.

"By George, I'm goin' to get Mary to write to you right—— How do you say it in French, Jimmy?"

"*Toot sweet,*" prompted the Yank, with new hope in his tones.

"Well, I'll have Mary write you *toot sweet,* then—that is, if you want me to."

"Want you to—— Whew, boy, that'll save my life. Will you?" he asked, eagerly.

"Sure," assured O. D.

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V

WE WAS OFF FOR THE FRONT!

BEFORE he had joined the army and been through a lot of front-line stuff Jimmy McGee thought that it was mighty romantic to wear a uniform and carry a gun off to war. But somebody spilled the beans for him pretty soon. Jimmy couldn't find any romance in the mud and rain when his chief ration was black coffee, canned beef, and hardtack. When O. D. said that he would have Mary write to him something stirred 'way down in him that hadn't stirred since he had quit thinking about war as a romantic expedition, and Jimmy was pretty sure that the romance stuff was coming back to life again.

"Wonder if Mary would want a souvenir of this *guerre?*" asked Jimmy, thoughtfully.

"I know she would, because before I left she made me promise to bring back a German helmet or something from the battles. But of course I haven't been near a fight yet," answered O. D.

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"Mary gets the helmet that I took from that Boche major, and *toot sweet,* you can bet on that," declared McGee.

"But you'll want to keep the helmet yourself, Jimmy."

"Hell afire, the helmet's Mary's. There's no use waitin' until the *guerre* is *finee* before I give it to her, is there?" blurted out Jimmy, confusedly.

"No—guess not. Send it to her, then. Mary'll be tickled to death with it and to know that it comes from a real soldier who's been wounded. But go on with what you were tellin' me. When did you get sent up to the front?"

"Arrh, we hung 'round Coetquidan until 'bout February first, then we got orders to *partee.* We was darn sure that we was goin' to the front, but didn't have no idea what part of it. Anyhow, if you had told us we wouldn't have known any better, as we never paid any particular attention to any special fronts. All we knew was that the front was the front.

"Guess you know by now that we don't travel first-class in this country. You've seen them little cars that looks like a shoe-box set on wheels, marked, '40 *hommes*'—that's forty

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like you and me—and '8 *chevaux*'—means eight horses or as many mules. Well, that's the kind of parlor-cars that I've been tourin' France in. I always get in a horse-car if I can, as it's warmer, and, supposin' the *chevaux* don't step all over you, there's a chance to lay down and cork off a bit.

"They loaded us bag and baggage on a train of them kind of cars and a Frog blew some kind of a horn. We was off for the front. God a'mighty, you should have heard them Yanks cheerin' as we headed for the front. Passed through a lot of big towns and *beaucoup* villages where all of the Frogs came out to look at us as if we was a travelin' circus. Come pretty near starvin' before we got where we was goin'.

"Stayed on the train all one night and one whole day. About seven o'clock of the second night I squirmed into about three feet of floor space and *cushayed*. Must have slept pretty good, 'cause next thing I knew somebody was shakin' me and yellin', 'Hey, come out of it, Jimmy—get up, we're at the front.' Gee! I snaps into it and rushes out of the door expectin' to see the front right outside. It was pretty dark, but I looked hard and couldn't see no Germans or trenches. It was

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quiet as death. I says to Frank Reynolds, who was top-sergeant of E Battery—you see, I had transferred from C to E—'Where the hell is it?' 'What?' he asks. 'The front, you nut,' I told him. 'Oh, it's right around here,' and he waved his arms around pointin' in every direction.

"I couldn't see nothin' but a railroad station and some flat cars. 'Funniest front I've ever been on,' said one of them Mexican-border veterans. 'This ain't no front,' says I.

" 'Bout that time it sounded as if there was goin' to be a thunder-shower. Everybody looked at one another kinda funny-like. We heard the thunder *encore*. I looked to the north and there was a lot of flashes showin' against the sky. The thunder began to growl like a bunch of bears over a big bone. Some rockets shot up and spilled a lot of sparks. A smart guy had to remark that they must be havin' a Fourth of July up there, but I was too busy tryin' to *compree* that them things meant war. I kept sayin' to myself, 'That's a war goin' on out there; that's the thing we came up here to get in.'

"They talk a lot about thrills in love-stories and books, but those story-page people don't know a thrill from a bowl of mush compared

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to the things that was runnin' up and down my backbone that first night. Course you know the guns and flashes was quite a ways, 'bout twenty kilos from where we was, and there wasn't much danger of us gettin' in any trouble ourselves. But seein' and hearin' just got me to thinkin' about the old *guerre* and knowin' that we was in it at last—well, it kind of made me feel a little different, that's all.

"We harnessed the old *chevaux* up, hooked 'em to the guns and got all the other junk, includin' them *fourgeons*—French wagons, you know—started. 'Bout dawn we rumbled through a town that looked as if it had been shut up for the winter. Wasn't a light goin'. Not a pup on the streets. Nothin' but us. There was *beaucoup* houses all shot to hell—roofs gone, windows out, walls cavin' in. Some places were nothin' but rubbish. There was so little left of a few houses that you couldn't have salvaged a thing even if you had a pull with the guy at the salvage dump. I found out later that the name of the place was *Swasson* (Soissons). Must have been some battlin' 'round that joint.

"After leavin' *Swasson* we hit a road that led right up to the trenches, or damn near it,

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anyway. Anybody, even an S. O. S. bird with six months' experience in Paris, would have guessed that we must be somewhere near the front. There was old trenches runnin' every which way; at that time I thought the detail that dug 'em must have been zigzag, as all of the trenches was crooked like a bunch of old dead snakes. I saw *beaucoup* barbed wire stretched 'round. But I've seen lots more since that day.

"As we hiked along a gun would boom out some place up along the front. Wasn't none of that war stuff that you look for after readin' some war books. Just now and then a boom and a flash or two.

"It was mighty cold ridin' a horse that night. Bein' from Florida, I ain't used to much cold weather, and my hands and feet come pretty near bein' ice before we finally got to our *échelon* near a tumbled-down village called Chassemy. Listen 'bout that *échelon* stuff. It was somethin' new to me before I got to the front, as I never took Greek at school. Well, it seems that *échelon* means the place that ain't quite at the front, but just about as bad, bein' as how the Boche can always shell *échelons* with big guns. The men, horses, and other things that ain't

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needed at the front all the time stay at the *échelon* till they send for them. Time we made the *échelon* everybody was so sleepy that we didn't wait to unroll, but just sprawled about on the barrack floor and *cushayed.*

"I came to about four o'clock in the afternoon and we started to hunt somethin' to eat, naturally. Everybody was damn curious to know just where the front was. Nobody seemed to know just exactly what way to take to get to it and to our positions. You see, we were to relieve the French. There was nothin' else to do but wait 'round.

"Finally, two days later, three French officers came over and got the Cap to go off with them to reconnoiter. He came back that night and told us that we would move the guns into position next day.

"Next night we took the four pieces and everythin' needed to fight the *guerre* with and hit for the front. You can imagine us goin' to the front for the first time. Lots of the boys was expectin' a battle before we got up there and other guys kept lookin' for dead men or wounded. It was the same as walkin' to church on Sunday. We got to the front without knowin' it.

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"'Here we are,' says the skipper, and he halted the column on the side of a road. The top-sergeant thought he was tryin' to fool us and asked him what the halt was for. 'Do you want to go out in No Man's Land?' asked the Cap. To tell the truth, it was hard for any of us to believe that we were at the front. You'll find that the front ain't what it's cracked up to be, in a way.

"We put the guns in four positions that had already been built by the French and camouflaged 'em with a lot of nettin'. When I saw 'em in daylight I thought I was lookin' at a scene in a theater. The gun positions was right on the road, mind you—any one passin' could see 'em, and I thought that we would hide the things 'way down in some kind of a mysterious valley, or somethin' like that.

"Our homes were 'way down under the earth, dug-outs they call 'em. No chance much to keep warm in dug-outs, and two men couldn't pass each other in 'em, they was so narrow. We *cushayed* on wooden planks. Every thing, kitchens, officers' quarters, and all, were down in dug-outs. When you did get upon the ground you had to be mighty careful as there was *beaucoup* shell-holes.

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The fields looked as if they had the smallpox —and it was hard to keep from fallin' into them shell-holes.

"After foolin' around with the old army stuff of changin' orders a hundred times a day we put over our first shots by registerin' on a brewery that the Germans was supposed to live in. Before I forget it let me tell you one of the funniest things about fronts. Our guns pointed one way and the front was in another, or almost that bad, anyway. I kept thinkin' the lines was out beyond the muzzles of our pieces, but the Cap said that it was off to the right more and that if we walked that way we'd most likely run into the Germans' first-line trenches. Sure was a puzzle to me for a long time.

"Well, can't say that there was any too much excitement up on the old Cheman de Damns front (Chemin des Dames) except the mornin' that Jimmy Leach, our cook, made real biscuits. It's a wonder the Heinies didn't hear us hollerin' and come over, we made so much fuss over those biscuits. Then there was hell to pay after we put over a big barrage once. You *compree* barrages, don't you, that's when all the big and little guns start popping off at once accordin' to some kind of

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a schedule and generally the doughboys go over under the barrage to attack the Boche trenches. You see, before we got up there the Boches and French were fightin' the *guerre* like this, 'You don't shoot and I won't.' We changed that argument *toot sweet* by startin' in with barrages and raids. Naturally the Germans got mad and came back at us. That made the French hotter than hell. A general came right over to our general and said it had to be stopped. No wonder the *guerre* ain't ended. As we was under the French command we had to do accordin' to orders.

"You might think that we got into the ways of the *guerre* with an awful jolt. But we didn't. It just came to us gradual like. We got used to the whine of a shell and got so we could tell when they was comin' and goin'. There wasn't many casualties. Few fellows got bumped off in the infantry on raidin' parties. We lost a couple or so in the artillery.

"I saw my first dead man, killed in the *guerre*, about three weeks after goin' in the line. Fragments of a shell had hit him in two or three places. He was messed up all over one side of the road. I couldn't tell

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much if he was a man or mule, the way he was scattered 'round. A fellow standin' near said it was Bill Rand, a lad I used to sleep in the same tent with at Boxford. Course I was sorry for poor Bill, but it didn't worry me much. Never thought of it anymore—that's the way it's been for all the boys. Just got used to takin' the *guerre* as it came along.

"The cooties got on us up there and I ain't been lonesome for 'em since that time—don't believe a fellow can ever get rid of the damn things. Gas was the big thing that scared me at first. Now it's bombs. O. D., one of them Boche planes dronin' over your bean, waitin' to pull up his tailboard and let a bomb drop, is the worst thing I ever want to be up against. You 'ain't got a bit of protection, unless, of course, you're 'way under the ground.

"Talkin' about the gas stuff reminds me of what happened to Bill Conway. Bill was an old regular, been in the service eighteen years, soldiered every place the American flag ever flew and told us that gas, bombs, and shrapnel all tied up in one bag couldn't made him budge. We knew Bill pretty well and if there was anything that had him licked

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it was gas. He used to go to sleep with his mask on sometimes. Well, Jimmy Leach and a few of us decided to get Bill one night, so we hid his old gas-mask and when he got in the dug-out somebody beat on a tin can and bawled out, 'Gas—gas!'

"Say, you would have died laughin' at old Bill. He jumps for his mask. Nothin' doin'. He tried to take Jimmy Leach's, but couldn't. Everybody had piled into the bunks and pulled blankets over their heads. Some of 'em began groanin' and coughin'. 'Oh, my God, I'm gassed, I'm gassed!' yelled Bill, and he dived under a pile of his own blankets. 'So am I,' shouted Leach, comin' up for air. The rest of us all threw the blankets back and began smokin'. Finally, after 'bout half an hour, and he nearly suffocated, Bill stuck his head out and saw us and that there wasn't any gas. Maybe he didn't cuss us out! Said we were tin soldiers and belonged to a tin army. Some day if I ever get back to my old newspaper job and a typewriter I'm goin' to write a book about Bill Conway and call it *Tin Sojers.*

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VI

AMERICAN JOANS OF ARC

"A MONTH and a half was long enough for us on the Cheman de Damns front. We *parteed* 'bout March fifteenth or so and got on another one of them funny little trains—didn't stay on long—only 'bout fifteen hours.

"Detrained at Château-Brienne and started hiking over the road to our rest-camp. We was due for a rest, also furloughs. But I ain't seen neither of them things so far. That country down there sure was the darb for us. It was just turnin' off kind of spring-like and warm, too. We were the first Americans to go through that section, and the people—honest, O. D., they must have thought that we were American Joans of Arc. Everybody came rushin' to the doors and waved to us. The mademoiselles threw us kisses by the bushel. I got so excited that I muffed most of 'em that came my way.

"After bein' up in that mud-coated front

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country where you hardly ever saw human bein's, just soldiers, and where all of the houses had holes in 'em and the gardens were all torn up by shells, it was great to get back where the fields was green and people smiled and said nice things. I was gettin' to this French stuff 'bout that time and I could *compree* a little of what they said.

"Our first stop was at a little town called Dienville. We blew in with the band playin' and everybody happy. The villagers gave us the hell of a fine welcome and made us feel to home *toot sweet.* Right after I put my horse on the picket-line and camouflaged my equipment I started lookin' for something to *monjay* and a place to *cushay.* First store I hit was a baker shop—*boulangerie,* they say in *Fransay.* The shop was full of women and little girls. They was talkin' a mile a minute. That's the fastest thing they do in this country, you know, *parley*—and every few minutes I could hear 'em say '*Américains—Américains.*'

"Finally I asked 'bout *monjayin'* and they told me where the restaurant was. I never had tried to get a *chambre* before, but I got *parleyin'* 'bout a place to *cushay,* and a little girl 'bout twelve years old and pretty—listen

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to me, O. D., that child was the darb of a *petite mademoiselle.* She asked her mother how 'bout my stayin' with them, or it sounded that way to me. Course I said in my foolish French, *'Keskesay?'* which means, What did you say?

"The mademoiselle was a litttle timid. Guess I'm kind of hard to look at, anyway. She got closer to her mother, but she didn't hide them pretty blue eyes. Looked me straight in the face and said her mother, the madame, would fix me up on the *cushay* stuff. Then I got kind of brave myself and went over to her and her mother. The girl put her hand in mine *toot sweet* and said, *'Comrade.'* I never was much for bein' 'round children, but I grabbed her and threw her up and down like I have seen daddies do. She kissed me smack on the cheek and said her name was Louise.

"That little mademoiselle's kiss was the first one I had in a long time, O. D. Sometimes I still get the taste of it, as I 'ain't had another since. Louise and the madame was more than *jauntee,* which as I *compree* it means nice, or kind. They fed me *dey zerfs, der lay*—that's eggs and milk—and *beaucoup pom de tear fritz* for every *monjay.* I *cu-*

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shayed in a real *lee*—Frog for bed—that night, and honest it took me near three hours to get asleep, the bed was so soft. Next mornin' I fooled 'em and didn't answer *reveille*—*cushayed* till 'bout nine bells and got up, shaved with real hot water, washed as far down my neck as my hand could go and sure felt fittin' for anything.

"Louise had beat it to school, but the madame saved a big bowl of *café-ooo-lay*—O. D., if you ever drink a bowl of real French *café-ooo-lay* you'll never be satisfied with that stuff they serve in Childs' or the Waldorf. It's coffee with *beaucoup* hot milk, and it sure is the darb. Along with that *café-ooo-lay* I had a hunk of regular *du pan*. Frog bread is *bon* when it's made right—and some *du burre*—butter, you know. Madame kept *parleyin'* somethin' 'bout *dey zerfs*—which are eggs in American—but I told her that I'd wait till dinner to *monjay* the omelet.

"While I was gettin' away with the *petite dayjunay*—as madame called what I was monjayin'—she told me that her *marrieh*, her husband, was a lieutenant in the Frog artillery—*swasont kans*—which means the same as our three-inch pieces. Showed me *beaucoup* pictures of the old man and lots of

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souvenirs. He'd been in the *guerre* three and a half years—wounded three times. I began thinkin' that us Americans didn't have so much kick comin' bein' as how we were about four years late in gettin' in against the Kaiser.

"When Louise came home from school she took me out for a walk. Say, you ought to have seen the guys pike me off. 'What you doin', Jimmy, teachin' kindergarten?' lots of 'em asked me. I told 'em no, that she was my *fiancée* and was goin' to *partee* to *Amérique* with me. Louise *compreed* that line and said, '*Oui*' all the time.

"There was a band concert in the little square that afternoon, and, believe me, the Frogs sure enjoyed it. They hadn't heard any music since the *guerre* started, except the church organ, I guess. I had a flock of little mademoiselles hangin' on to me by that time, as Louise was mighty popular with 'em all. Course, as luck would have it, I had a bar or two of chocolate in my jeans, and I handed it over to Louise and her little friends. Boy, they thought I was a regular Santa Claus after that.

"When we left Dienville two days later all the kids in the village was cryin' because the

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Americans was *parteein'*. I sure got to hand it to those people in that place, they was the old darb for us. Course things has changed a good deal since then—we ain't new to the Frogs any more and lots of 'em with stuff to sell have found out that we get a darn sight more *frankers* a month than the Frog army pays.

"We hiked 'bout five days or so, stoppin' every night in some village and finally got to the area which was to be our rest-camp. Just got settled in the billets when we got an order to *partee toot sweet*. We was kinda sore, but most of us said, '*Say la guerre*,' and let it go at that. Nobody knew what the hell it meant as we was miles from newspapers and telegraph wires, and never got any news of the *guerre*. That's how we started the seventeen-day hike from down around Joinville straight up to the Toul front.

"That hike was one of the worst things we bucked against durin' this *guerre*. There wasn't but two days on which the sun came out at all. It rained day and night. The roads was all mud and so slippery that the men and horses was slidin' all over the place. There wasn't no way to carry fresh rations, so we *monjayed* 'corn willy,' black coffee, and hardtack seventeen days straight. The horses

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had a hell of a time, too, as there never was enough hay and oats for all of 'em to *monjay* at one time. Guess we covered 'bout twenty-two kilofloppers every day. Never got up later than three bells in the mornin' and generally got to *cushay* around *nerver.* That's nine o'clock in this country.

"When we hit a town at night we had to stretch a picket-line for the *chevaux,* then water and feed 'em. After that we could feed ourselves and hunt a *chambre* or hay-loft to *cushay.* As a rule, the *chambres* was all for the officers when we got to 'em. We sure had a tough time hikin' across this damn country. Never did get warm the whole time. 'Bout that time my old feet began to get *malade.* Whenever you hear a Frog say *malade* you'll know they're talkin' about bein' sick. They was so cold all the time until they would swell up overnight and in the mornin' you had a fat chance of gettin' your shoes on, as those darn hobnails used to shrink up like a pair of white-flannel britches do after washin' 'em. One mornin' the old feet was so bad that I had to wear a pair of those wooden boats 'round. The doctors call feet like I had trench feet. I've had 'em ever since. Wear tens now; used to wear eights and a half back in civilian days."

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VII

THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE GUERRE

"LONG 'bout April second we passed through Toul and hit the American front. The First Division outfits was relieved there by us. Most of our gang got billeted 'round a placed called Boucq. I was at Corniéville before we went into positions. Our billets were the worst things a man could imagine. Dirty, cold, and hardly any bunks at all.

"We soon found out that we was goin' to fight a different kind of *guerre* down there than we had been doin'. The country was so muddy and soft that you couldn't dig in and make dug-outs. Everything was on the ground. Course my battery had to get the worse place of all—up in a swamp. If you got off the little duckboard walks you had to get a detail to pull you out of the mud. The positions that we had was on the Germans' maps, as they had already got a gun belonging to the First Division, before we took the position over.

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"Two days after we got our pieces layed on some Boche targets they began throwin' 'em over at us. That was the first time we'd ever been under real shell-fire in the positions. It was a regular circus. Old Bill Conway was on gas guard at the time. They gave us a klaxon for a gas alarm, unless it's possible to rig up some kind of a tin gong to beat on. Well, Bill, he was walkin' post swingin' the Ford klaxon 'round, just as uninterested in the *guerre* as if he had been walkin' post in a safe Coast Artillery fort. He had been told to sound that klaxon in case of gas. A big boy whistled on the way. Sounds just like the whine of a dyin' wildcat. Something terrible to listen to, believe me, till you get kind of fed up on the stuff.

"Bang—Bluey! That two-twenty—we call 'em barrack bags, they're so damn big—landed 'bout thirty feet from our last latrine and sent fragments of itself and trees, with about a ton of dirt, in all directions. Old Conway, with his eighteen years of continued service, started cranking that klaxon for all he was worth as he ran toward a bunkhouse.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!

"The Heinies were puttin' 'em over for fair and too damn close to be interestin'.

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Course everybody jerked on the old gas-mask. But Bill Conway was so excited and scared till he clean forgot all about his own mask—all he could do was sound that klaxon and shout, 'Gas!' The skipper came tearin' out of his B. C. station, gas-mask and all. The first thing he saw was Conway without a mask. 'Put your mask on, you boob, 'ain't you got any sense? I'll court martial you for disregardin' orders.' Conway drops the klaxon and pulls the mask over his bean and face *toot sweet.*

"Corporal Reynolds, who was gas non-com., comes up about that time and asks Bill what the devil he sounded the gas alarm for. Bill says, 'We're gettin' gassed.' Reynolds, of course, was expected to know gas from ordinary fresh air, bein' as how he was the gas non-com., so he pulled his mask off and sniffed 'round considerable. 'Hell afire,' says he, 'there ain't no gas.' Everybody took off their masks and the skipper gave Conway extra fatigue for causin' such a disturbance.

"All durin' the time that they was arguin' 'bout the gas the old shells were sailing right over our heads and hittin' pretty close. One guy got a splinter in the fat of his thigh and Deacon O'Tell's underclothes were ripped off

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a line where he had 'em dryin'. But that was all the casualties we had that day. You see, the woods was mighty tall and strong there and they sorta shielded us from the fragments and hunks.

"Things rattled on that way every day. We used to get shelled every afternoon 'round three or four o'clock. Couple of the boys got it pretty soon and they carted 'em off to a hospital. Never seen or heard of 'em since.

"The *monjayin'* was *pas bon.* Never got any sugar in the coffee, and as for milk—well, there wasn't any 'round them diggin's. O. D., that's one thing that got my goat a long time. You read 'bout all this Hooverizin' stuff. How the folks back home is doin' without sugar—havin' wheatless, meatless, fireless and all kind of days so the men at the front can get the best *monjayin'* there is—and we was starvin' a good many times. Course if we hadn't been Americans we'd have kicked and raised an awful smell, but bein' a bunch of Yankees and knowin' what we was up against in this *guerre,* we just fooled 'em and kept on regardless. Now I ain't sayin' this so much for myself, cause I'm pretty hefty and can get along. But we had a bunch of little guys up there that weren't

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more than a bunch of strings. Those kids used to stay up all night luggin' ninety-five-pound shells—gettin' wet most of the time—then dive into their cold bunks, *cushay* 'bout two hours and get up to *monjay*. What the hell do you think they'd get? Maybe a thin slice or two of bacon—hardtack most of the time, black coffee with no sugar, and that's all. Fat breakfast for a fightin' man. You can't blame nobody for them things except the people back at the ports and in the S. O. S. who are supposed to get the eats up to us.

"That's a rotten, damn shame, because we always got good eating back where I was—fresh meats—vegetables—butter—jam—milk in the coffee all the time," interrupted O. D.

"Listen to that," exploded Jimmy. "There you are—everybody for himself in this army. Those ginks back there ain't worryin' much 'bout us guys that's fightin' this *guerre*. 'Send 'em up a carload of "corn-willy" and a train of hardtack—that'll be enough to keep 'em goin' another month or two,' that's what they say down in the S. O. S., I guess.

"Round about April tenth the Boches thought they'd give our lines a good feel, so they came over strong and sent gas barrages and high explosive mixed up with *beaucoup*

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shrapnel and other stuff, along with their doughboys. This happened up in the Bois Brûlé—which means burned woods in Frog lingo. Now you might think that our boys, bein' a bit green at the *guerre* stuff, would have been sick to their stomachs, or somethin' like that after gettin' such rough treatment from the Boches, but it wasn't that way at all. I believe that most of the doughboys was just itchin' for a good battle, anyway. The way they waded into the Boches was big stuff. Banged 'em all over the lots. When the ammunition gave out the fellows started wallopin' 'em with their fists and the butt-ends of rifles. You know Boches ain't no good when it comes to fightin' at close quarters. In fact, if you take 'em out of that close formation stuff that they pull when comin' over—well, they ain't worth a hurrah—so when the Yanks shoved their fists in the snouts it was *finee toot sweet.*

"The battlin' kept up for about three or four days. Every time the Boches tried to get a footin' in Appremont we'd throw 'em out again. Soon they got tired, seein' how impossible it was to stay there, and went back to their trenches and dug-outs.

"The Boches stayed quiet until the night of

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April nineteenth, or rather first thing in the mornin' of the twentieth. I was up in a position so close to the front-line trenches that you could throw hand grenades at a Yankee doughboy, if he was fool enough to stick his bean over the parapet. About ten men from each battery had been detailed to man a ninety-five-millimeter battery—some old-fashioned French guns, relics of the war in 1870.

"Well, O. D., they can talk 'bout battles till they're blue in the face, but I'll always claim that the battle of Seicheprey which was pulled off that mornin' was the first big battle of the *guerre* that this army ever got mixed up in. We lost five hundred men that one night and the Boches lost a hell of a lot more—so you can judge by that.

"Funny as the devil how a man kinda knows when somethin' big is comin' off. But you do. Every night there'd be *beaucoup* rockets and star-shells goin' up. But this night there was more than *beaucoup,* if you know what that means. The way those red and different colored rockets began goin' up made me think that a bunch of pink, yellow, and red snakes had been turned loose in heaven and was crawlin' 'round the sky. Now

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and then a star-shell would go up and bust. Then you could see the trenches and No Man's Land. But that's all. There wasn't a thing stirrin'. Not a sound. Almost too quiet to be safe.

"Just at the beginnin' of one o'clock a German gun boomed. Then hell broke loose all along our front. Never heard such an infernal noise in all my life. Sounded like a bunch of demons poundin' on brass-drums with trip-hammers. *Toot sweet* our guns began to talk back. They got us up to the pits and we started to man them crazy-looking ninety-five-millimeter stove-pipes. That's what the cannon looked like, anyway.

"Shells was whizzin' in from every direction. High explosive cracked over our beans and rained down like hail. Rat-ta-tat! Ra-ta-tat! Bang! Bluey! Smash! That was all we could hear up and down the lines. The barrages roared away like barbarian music. Pretty soon the noise hurt my ears so till I couldn't try to listen to orders. Just worked away like a mechanical man.

"We started to fire just as a shell spilled its load near the first piece. God! the screech of them three boys that got all torn up was enough to tear a man's ear-drums to shreds—

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couldn't help but hear 'em even with the bangin' of the guns.

"All of us was too busy rammin' shells in our piece and firin' the thing to notice much that was goin' on, but the flames from the burstin' shells and the flares made it almost as bright as day ever gets to be in this country. The yellow light was kinda blindin' as it came in spurts and jerks. I looked ahead of us, down toward the trenches and No Man's Land. The Boche infantry was coming straight at us with fixed bayonets. I ain't jokin' you, boy, but there was some kind of a cold thing chasin' up and down my old spine for a few minutes. I could almost see our doughboys strainin' down in their trenches waitin' to get up and at 'em.

"At last they let 'em go to it. It was some smash-up when they hit them Germans. The Boches was at least five to one stronger than us and their weight counted enough to make us fall back to the streets of Seicheprey.

"I speak of streets and Seicheprey as if it might have been a regular village. But it wasn't. Seicheprey was just like a village ghost. Not a house standin' up—everythin' littered about. Stones, bricks, wood heaps, rubbish, barbed-wire entanglements were in

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the streets and every place. The fightin' down there was all hand to hand.

"We had been told to fall back with the infantry in case it was necessary to let the Boches come on so that our reinforcements could get up and give us a hand. But Lieutenant Davis, who was runnin' our battery, was off that fallin'-back stuff. He says, 'Stick to it, boys, and give 'em hell!' We [illegible] all right, but it was hot stickin'.

"There was one boy only about eighteen years old in our crew, and when Johnson got his arm ripped off by shrapnel and it flew off and hit Jackson, the kid, he got up from the blow a wild man. That's one of the worst things I've seen in this *guerre*.

"Jackson's face was drippin' blood and he was swingin' Johnson's arm around to hit the boys that was tryin' to get him out of the pit. It's damn hard to work with a madman next to you cursing and prayin' in the same breath. Finally they cornered him and carried him out. Johnson was stone dead, o' course, and they had to get him out, as we was steppin' all over him and trippin' up. Sergeant Broadhead and Shorty Williams picked poor Johnson up and was gettin' back toward a dug-out, when high explosive got 'em both—

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scooped Broadhead's stomach right off him and gashed the legs off of Shorty. Course we heard 'em groanin' as the noise of the battle would go up and down just like a piece of music. But they quit sufferin' soon, as both the lads went west *toot sweet.*

"All liaison with the other outfits was shot to hell, and we could only guess at what was goin' on with the doughboys and batteries. From the rifle and machine-gun firin' and the shoutin' and cursin', too—for there was *beaucoup* of that, and it sounded worse than the barrages, I judged that there must be some awful battlin' down in topsy-turvy Seicheprey. Accordin' to doughboys that I saw later, the Boches got mashed up all over that place.

"You see, when the scrappin' started down in Seicheprey it wasn't in formation. Everybody was by himself—or almost that way. That made it rotten for the Boches, as they ain't got any guts once they're alone. So the doughboys whaled 'em for a bunch of ghouls. Tell me they stripped right down from helmets on and started in bare fist or with bayonets.

"The Boches got some kind of a signal back to their batteries to throw over gas, and

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all of a sudden it looked as if the night had gone green. Green is the gas warnin', you know.

"'Gas! Gas!' You could hear that cry everywhere when the noise of the battle would let you. We stopped workin' our piece long enough to jerk gas-masks on. I swear but we looked like a bunch of devils with them things on, 'specially when the flames would shoot up around us.

"Our gang was gettin' it pretty hot 'round the gun-pits and there was so many of the fellows wounded and lyin' out beyond the pits that the Sanitary guys couldn't drag 'em in fast enough. Most of these wounded had been on the ammunition details and were hit on the way to the guns with shells. Every forty-five minutes a few of us would get relieved and crawl into the dug-out for a minute's rest. The Sanitary men asked for volunteers to help 'em get the wounded in. Every man who was on relief at that minute jumped up and went out to bring the boys in. That's the kind of spirit they had.

"A chap by the name of Wilson from F Battery had gone out to bring in some other lad and he got both of his own legs blown off. My old pal, Frank Gordon, heard

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Wilson moanin' out there and he ran out to get him.

"I'll never forget what happened just as Frank got on top of the little trench that ran 'round our gun. He had Wilson's legless body slung over his back. Shrapnel screamed like a hell-cat and good old Gordon's left arm and part of his head were jerked right out of socket and went flyin' over our heads. Gordon and Wilson toppled out of sight. I saw it all and couldn't stop myself. I jumped the trench, grabbed the first moanin' body I come to. Couldn't see 'em as there wasn't so much flares goin', and ran for the dug-out that they was usin' as a first-aid station. I found out that I had brought Ray Mason in."

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VIII

"GUESS I DIDN'T HAVE THE GUTS"

"THAT dug-out was sure one hell-hole. See we had been gettin' gas right along and it poured in the dug-out, as they had to keep openin' the door to let 'em in with wounded. There was nine fellows, naked and smeared all up with iodine and blood, stretched out on bunks. Most of 'em were so torn up and badly hurt that their wounds had made 'em numb. Consequently they were darn quiet—except one little Greek boy. He was alive to pain all right. Both his eyes were hangin' to strings of flesh and his body was like an old flour-sieve. He couldn't keep from moanin', and I'll be damned if I could keep from listenin' to him.

"The first thing a wounded man generally does is to jerk his mask off, if he's got one on. That's what the boys were doin' in the dug-out. You had to battle with some of 'em to keep the things on. Those that did get the masks off got sick and vomited all over.

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Gosh, O. D., it was kinda bad down there. The big thing that appealed to me was how all the guys acted. Those that wasn't wounded worked along pretty cool and didn't show much signs of breakin'. The wounded showed a lot of guts the way they kept still and didn't let the old hurts get the best of 'em.

"While I was down there givin' 'em a hand a doughboy that had been captured crawled into the dug-out with his tongue cut out. The Boches did that to scare us, and they drove him back into our lines with a bayonet. Hines, one of the gun crew, went crazy, he got so mad when he heard that, and tore out of the place for Seicheprey, where he got fightin' hand to hand with the Germans.

"I went back to the gun and was fixin' to try and get Frank when Lieutenant Davis gave us orders to fire again, and said there was no use tryin' to bring him in, as he was dead.

"The ammunition was comin' mighty slow and when a man came in with a shell I told him to make it snappy and get 'em comin' faster. He said, 'All right, Jimmy.' I looked at him hard, and be damned if it wasn't Father Farrell, our chaplain. Say, that was

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one brave little guy. He ain't any bigger than a small kid, but he was luggin' shells for a long time before he let anybody know it was him.

"Course, every time one o' the boys would get it he would run to him *toot sweet* and do what he could—brought the wounded in and buried the dead right under the hardest kind of a fire. Father Farrell got nicked in the arm with a shell splinter on his way back to the rear the next day. So did I. On recommendation of our general the French gave him a *Craw de Guerre.* I never could say that thing right, but it's a War Cross for pullin' hero stuff.

"I saw how hard the chaplain was workin' and I knew my job on the crew wasn't so heavy, so he took my place and I carted ammunition a while. Just when we thought that the thing was *fineed* a Boche plane came swoopin' down on us and opened up a machine-gun barrage. I'll say that the Boches had pretty good guts, but no more than Carl Davis had, the 'loot' that was our C. O. Davis grabbed a rifle from one of the gang and ran right after that Boche, pepperin' away at him like he was shootin' at a flock of blackbirds. It was still darker than hell and

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all that we could see of the Boche plane was black outlines, just as if some big hawk was flappin' its wings right over our heads. Gee! it was uncanny and sort of ghostlike. Davis was runnin' up and down like a man in a relay race all by himself. He didn't have nothin' on except an undershirt, pants, and boots. We all laughed at him and that helped a lot to get our minds off our troubles. Finally the Boche whirred away and Lieutenant Davis put the old rifle up. Poor Davis, he was some fightin' kid. They got him up at Chateau-Thierry. But that comes later.

"The battlin' was wearin' down to a small noise. Most of the Boches had all they could stand. They began tryin' to get back to their lines, and our batteries cut 'em up like a lawn-mower gets the grass. Their artillery had shut up except those few guns that was firin' at ambulances and wounded parties. You see, our ambulances had to come up over a road that was pickin' and when they started 'round Dead Man's Curve—Bluey! Bang!—the Boches would smash 'em, wounded and all, into pieces. We had to keep our wounded down in that dug-out about six hours waitin' to evacuate 'em

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on that account. The little Greek boy I was tellin' you about died before they got him away.

"Exceptin' for a few guns goin', now and then, the place was quiet 'round five-thirty. So quiet you could hear the wounded moanin' mighty easy, and now and then a thud was heard when barbed wire supportin' a dead man would snap and let the body hit the ground.

"The early mornin' was as gray as cigarette ashes, but it was plenty light enough to see what was 'round us. I wished it had been a blame sight darker. I couldn't look at poor old Frank Gordon to save my life. He was lyin' right outside the trench—face turned toward the dug-out, mouth wide open and all blue and bloated like. The only arm he had was pointin' to the sky just like an arrow. He was almost straddlin' Wilson's trunk.

"But Gordon and Wilson was just two of many. There was *beaucoup* more of our boys and officers lyin' 'round in stiff heaps, all broken and twisted up. Down 'round the first-line infantry trenches it was as grim lookin' as an opened-up graveyard. There was *beaucoup* Germans piled up on the ground and hangin' on wire entanglements. All mostly

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dead—some just dyin'. I saw a few Americans scattered in and out between 'em, too.

"Father Farrell came along and asked some of us to give him a hand to put the boys away. I was one of the gang that started the buryin' stuff, but when I came to Frank Gordon— Honest to God, O. D., I couldn't touch him. Sounds foolish to say that—don't it? I swear it's a fact. Guess I didn't have the guts.

"I says, 'Father, you'll have to get somebody else on this detail in my place. I can't touch Gordon.' I used to sleep with that boy and listen to him tell me 'bout his girl, a colleen that was waitin' for him to come back to the old country—Gordon was born in Ireland, you see. Father Farrell understood, I guess, 'cause he says, 'Here, you take his identification tag, this ring and pocketbook, and keep it; they're his effects. Then you beat it to the dug-out.' I grabbed them things and run like hell. I was kinda feelin' funny in the gills. First and last time it's hit me that way, though.

"We got relieved that night and were sent back to the *échelon* for a rest and somethin' to eat. We'd been *monjayin'* the old iron rations for almost a week straight.

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"It wouldn't have been nothin' more than half natural for us to mope 'round after such excitement and think 'bout it or talk a hell of a lot. But I never saw much of that stuff—not durin' the whole time we've been in the *guerre*. Day after we got back we got an old madame to cook up a big feed for some of us that was on the gun crew. Had a hot bath before *monjayin'*, and maybe I didn't feel like a regular guy!

"All the fellows was cleaned up, and you'd have never known that they had been battlin'. Course everybody missed old Gordon. He could tell the funniest stories I ever listened to and play and sing stuff in a way that would have set Broadway nuts. Somebody got up and said a toast to him, and we drank champagne to his memory. There wasn't no crape-hangers at the party. Course we was mighty sorry for the boys that had passed out. But we still had to fight the *guerre* for ourselves, and if there's any way the *guerre* can lick you it's by getting your goat over things that's happened to you or your pals. You got to forget it, O. D. Got to be a hard guy as much as you can.

"I heard lots about the stuff called philosophy of soldiers and all that bosh before I got

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over here—if it's philosophy that they've got or actin', I don't believe the boys know it themselves. Anyhow they call it that in books and magazines. I used to throw that kind of line back yonder, years ago—so it seems. But I'm *finée* now. You got to hand me nails when I ask for nails to-day. Brass-headed tacks won't do, O. D.

"But to get back to the philosophy stuff. In this *guerre* you got to tell yourself that there ain't no shells or bullets with your name on 'em, watch your step on the gas stuff and you ain't got much to say about whether a bomb is goin' to get you or not. So quit worryin' 'bout 'em till you get in a raid. Makes no difference how close they come or how many they get right next to you. That's just proof that nothin' ain't labeled for you. Get me on that? All right, next. One of the first damn things in French I'm goin' to learn you is to say, *'Say la guerre.'* Means, 'It's the war.' When you get to sayin' that till you believe it then you got the old war licked a hundred ways. That's my way of lookin' at this stuff. Call it philosophy if you want to. But old Zeke Doolittle looks at it the same way and he couldn't know a philosophy book from a monocle.

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"I ate so much at that party had to see the doctor next day. Had a bellyache that worried me more than the battle of Seicheprey. Doc tried to shoot some bull 'bout my havin' got gassed—then he painted my stomach with iodine and gave me a pill—same old stuff."

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IX

"THE OLD VAN SEEZEUM ON ITS WAY"

"AFTER the scrap 'round Seicheprey we didn't *encore* the battle much except when the Battle of Boucq started. That was one hell of a curious battle. The Boches got mad and began heavin' shells 'way back in the rears. Boucq wasn't too far away to be in it.

"That's where all our headquarters was located—regimental, brigade, division, and the whole damn shootin'-match. At that time Mudgy Jones, also known as Chisel-Face or Whistlin' Jaws, was colonel of our regiment. Let me tell you right now our regiment had a hell of a time gettin' where it was, handicapped as we were with that man as a C. O. All he could do was walk 'round whistlin' somethin' that didn't have no tune at all and find fault. Well, just to show you what kind of a gink Mudgy was, when the stuff started comin' and breakin' near regimental P. C. he dives down into a cellar and loses himself.

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The general comes over to give him hell 'bout somethin', and he couldn't be found. Finally some guy bribed Jones' orderly to tell where he was. Mudgy didn't pull any whistle stuff when the old gen. hauled him up.

"The battle of Boucq lasted 'bout four days, durin' which the One Hundred and Fourth Infantry—hardest bunch of doughboys in this man's army—got lined up on a hill by some French general and handed the Craw de Guerre for the whole damn outfit. Only outfit in the A. E. F. that can wear that thing as a regiment, too.

"We had a gang fight down 'round Xivray that lasted a day or so and made us lose quite a number of the fellows. Then we got pulled out of the Toul lines and loaded on another bunch of foolish-lookin' trains. When we was loadin'—that was 'bout the last day of June or nearbouts—they handed out some wild rumor stuff 'bout us goin' to parade in Paree on the Fourth. All the *soldats* believed it and a hell of a lot of second looeys —even the C. O. By the way, Davis that was with us at Seicheprey had been made a captain and put in charge of our outfit.

"The train started toward Paree and made 'bout three hundred kilos in that direction.

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All along the tracks and in the big towns we passed through there was gangs of girls and school-kids shoutin' at us. Throwin' kisses and askin' for *bisqués*—them's biscuits in *anglay*. We fired all the hardtack we had to 'em, as usual.

"That was the time we learned how to call ourselves in *fransay*. I kept hearin' the French kids sayin' somethin' that sounded like '*Van Seezeum*' and wondered what the hell it meant. A French Canuck up and says, 'That's the way they say Twenty-sixth in Frog.' They was glad, he says, because the old *Van Seezeum* was on its way. Then I began gettin' it. The kids knew who we was somehow. Some of 'em hollered, '*Caput* Boches at Seicheprey.' Gosh! there must have been somethin' in the papers 'bout us, the way they was talkin' it off.

"Right when we got close enough to smell Paree—and Otto Page began swearin' that he could see the Eifel Tower—the trains got switched off to the right and started hell bent for election toward Château-Thierry. Noisy-le-Sec was where we got switched off, and that's where the cussin' started and it lasted until we got in the old *guerre* again up 'round Saacy and Citry.

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"Damn, but we was sore—been thinkin' 'bout that promised rest and paradin' up and down Paree, you know, and we felt that they was rubbin' it in, that's all. They just hated to think that some guy was rubbin' it in. We was National Guard Boy Scouts, some of 'em called us before the *guerre*. But they can take their funny names plumb to hell to-day. Like to know where this man's army would be if it wasn't for the National Guard.

"Jerked us out of sleep 'bout midnight and unloaded the works at a joint called La Ferté—hiked thirteen kilofloppers to a town that I couldn't call out loud if I wanted to. Have to think it when I want to remember anythin' 'bout the place. They put us up in a big park. Spent the Fourth there. The villagers hung out *beaucoup* flags, but I couldn't recognize 'em, though a Frenchman pointed to some and said, '*Amêricain.*' Had a party on the Fourth. *Beaucoup van rouge.* Some old champagne—and a *poulet.* Forgot to tell you 'bout *poulets*—they're chickens—the eatin' kind, you *savvy?*

"Next day we got orders to haul it up to the front or pretty near it. We blew into a big *château* grounds 'round early mornin'—everybody was so darn tired they *cushayed*

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right off the bat without camouflaging the stuff. A nuisance by name of Boots Jenkins, who had been made a second looey when even corporals was hard to get, was the Officer of the Day. He didn't come to until broad daylight and a bunch of Boche planes got hummin' overhead. Boots tried to turn out the guard—and found out that he had forgot to put a guard on at all. 'Some guy he was.' Then he started wakin' everybody up. 'Get up, every mother's son of you, move this picket-line and camouflage the wagons. Come on, shake it up,' and he pulled the blankets off George Woods. 'Git the hell out o' here—I'm *cushayin',*' bawled Woods. 'Don't give a damn, get up,' commanded Jenkins. 'Ah, take a flop for yourself, I don't belong to your gang. I'm a naval gunner on special duty.' That's what Boots got on every side.

"After a long time he got the stable sergeant—some draggin' kitchen police and old Bill Conway—wonderful crew for a detail. They moved every damn *cheval* we had and threw bushes over the guns and wagons. The rest of us had dragged our blankets and stuff up to the top of a hill and *cushayed* right on.

"The outfits hid in that big woods until it

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got time for us to cross the Marne and relieve the Second Division. This happened 'bout July eleventh or so. We was all set for any trick that the Boches might be willin' to try.

"There had been *beaucoup* bull flyin' 'round that Germany was makin' a last big drive for old Paree and most likely they'd try to cut through us 'round the Château-Thierry sector—that stuff was pretty well soaked into us and guess the gang wanted to show the marines that two weeks in Belleau Woods wasn't such big stuff after all, considerin' the way they jumped into the battlin' when it started. Course I ain't disputin' that the marines didn't pull off good stunts down there. But you got to remember we'd been in the lines damn near six months when the noise started at Château-Thierry."

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X

CHÂTEAU-THIERRY

"JULY fifteenth started off with a good bang.

"The Boches began drivin' from Rheims to where we were. The good old Rainbow boys from the Forty-second Division was near Rheims, so we didn't worry much 'bout the Boches breakin' through on the right flank. When the drive started toward us through Château-Thierry the Boches laid their last egg, I'm thinking. They gained a few yards the first day. Slowed right up the second. On the third we stopped 'em dead still in their tracks.

"The big thing happened before we had time to know it was comin' off. Some bird—Foch most likely—pushed a button and the whole damn French and American lines jumped up and busted the Boches right on the nose and in the eyes.

"Say, O. D., we better *cushay* before I get talkin' 'bout them mad days from Torcy up

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to Sergy Plateau. I could keep you awake all night listenin' to that Château-Thierry stuff," said Jimmy. His blue eyes were shooting fire and his face showed the excitement that just the mention of Château-Thierry caused.

"If you stop now, Jimmy, I won't ask Mary to write to you," warned O. D.

"You win, *toot sweet,*" answered McGee, quickly.

"*Encore,* then. If that's the way you say it in French," begged the brother of Mary.

"My outfit was stuck up on the top of a little ant-hill with the old howitzers pointed slam-bang at the Germans who was on a small mountain right across the way, when our drive got under way. The Yankee doughboys was down on the side of the ant-hill, hangin' on the roots and different kind of bushes to keep from slidin' down to the bottom and boggin' up to their necks in mud. The Boches had all the high places.

"The doughboys started over. We had to grab a place called Torcy. Now you must remember that country had seen *beaucoup* battlin' and was all shot up—so much so it was mighty hard traveling. There was so much rubbish and ruins. All that was left

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of some towns was names. As I said, the infantry jumped at 'em. The Boches was sure caught nappin'—didn't have an idea that we would come back so quick and hard. *Toot sweet* they began givin' us hell with their damn machine-guns. Course that was while they was makin' a stab at gettin' their yellow doughboys over the big scare that we threw into 'em. But our boys had got such a start that machine-gun fire, even as hellish as what they pumped into us, couldn't stop 'em. They was out for the Kaiser's scalp.

"We took Torcy on the short end of bayonets and barrage. The old artillery banged the Boches into a lot of sausage meat. The bodies used to trip us up, and how some of the guys cussed them dead Germans. *Toot sweet* after we started the drive a drove of prisoners began comin' in—privates, non-coms., loots, majors, and even colonels. We called 'em all Heinie and Fritz, you know, and some of the Boche officers got mad as the devil and wanted to be treated as officers. The Yanks prodded 'em with stiff bayonets when they pulled that stuff.

"From the first minute of the drive there was no let-up in battlin'. None of that trench-line fightin'. Open warfare, buddy. Open as

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a doorless barn, I mean. The noise never stopped like it did at Seicheprey, a few hours after it started. No, O. D., it was just one continual roarin', bangin', crashin', swearin', moanin', and prayin'. That's all. Gosh! there was so many kinds of different things that could kill a man, goin' at the same time that it's a wonder anybody was left to tell 'bout the Second Battle of the Marne.

"Time we took Torcy they said to get Hill 190. Maybe you know that's right 'bove Château-Thierry itself. You can imagine that the Boches made some stand to hang on to that place. They sure did. We had *beaucoup* boys put out of business gettin' up to Hill 190, believe me.

"After strugglin' up the sides of the hill—through barbed wire almost five feet high—and gettin' a smashin' artillery barrage shot at us—the Boches had got their big guns back and in position by that time—we ran into the worst machine-gun fire that ever was. The dirty Germans had camouflaged a few hundred machine-guns in a big wheat-field on top of the hill. You couldn't see nothin' but the wheat wavin' in the breeze when we started across it.

"Rat-ta-ta-tat! went the machine-guns. The

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boys began droppin' like rain. Wiped out companies at times. Our own machine-gunners said, 'To hell with waitin' on horses and mules.' They dragged their little babies right up to that wheat-field and gave the Boches some of their own medicine. Will you believe me that lots of the Boche gunners was found chained to their guns? Yep. It's a fact. The Boche morale had got so low till they had to chain their men to posts.

"The old *cheveaux* that used to drag our pieces 'round was half dead, anyway, when the drivin' started, and we had one hell of a time tryin' to keep up with the doughboys. Everybody had to get on the wheels and push and cuss at the same time. I tell you, man, the damn *chevaux* was dyin' in the traces. We managed to keep within range, but had to get some trucks to help us move.

"The Boches was thrown so hard from the top of Hill 190 that you could hear their necks breakin' when they landed down in the valley. I never saw such a gory-looking hill in all the days of drivin'. There was men piled waist high. Mostly Germans. Nobody had time to stop and bury dead people at a time like that. There wasn't time for nothin' but fightin' and movin'.

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"Takin' 190 meant gettin' into Château-Thierry. We found *beaucoup* Boches down there. They put up a scrap because there was a pile of stuff in the town that they wanted to try and save. Down in some parts of the joint, even after most of the Germans had started sprintin' for the Fatherland, there was some terrible battlin'.

"The main *rues* and *boulevards* was all chock-ablock with breastworks. They had pianos, tables, beds, big lookin'-glasses, sofas, bags stuffed with rotten smellin' rags and rubbish, piled up—well, Lord knows what wasn't used to stop us. Behind these things was the Boche machine-guns. They was just like a bunch of hose and played as wicked a stream of lead as you can think of. Americans and Frogs both forced these works and *fineed* the machine-gun fire.

"After that there ain't no way to describe the fightin'. It got all over the place. Like scrambled eggs in a fryin'-pan. The Yanks used rifles for clubs and waded into the Boches like a bunch of good cops. Bayonets and trench dirks came in with a noise like *finee* for the Germans—chased 'em up alleyways, dug 'em out of cellars, laid 'em cold—that's all there was to it.

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"Long, black shadows were camouflagin' what was left of Château-Thierry as we rumbled through it. I ain't much at tellin' how things look, any more. But Château-Thierry looked like a plowed-up graveyard and then some. The moonlight got turned on and made everythin' seem ten times worse, as the effect was kinda weird. Houses looked like a bunch of crumblin' skeletons. Troops was movin' over every street. Supply-trains and ammunition trucks rattled up and down. Ambulances crawled by so slow till we could hear the groans of the poor guys in them.

"Time we got opposite the bridge that had been knocked into the river by American artillery we got treated to a warm bombardment. Mashed up some of the lads pretty badly. That bombardment wasn't a trifle compared to the smell that came from unburied men. Whew! I hadn't got a chance to *monjay* all day and my belly was pretty weak 'bout that time. It sure was an awful stink.

"There was dead Americans, dead Frenchmen, and heaps of stark Boche corpses linin' the route—just like so many yard stones. Couldn't help but feel good when we would pass a big bunch of them swollen-up Germans, all blue in the face from dyin' like they did.

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"Our column was halted in Château-Thierry for 'bout three hours. We had to wait for some trucks to *encore* the drive with. Poor old *chevaux* were down for the count.

"I had already lost *beaucoup* stuff. Thought I'd hunt 'round some of the near-by houses, or what was left of houses. Needed some underclothes pretty bad. In one place I found a closet full of mademoiselle's underclothes. You know that kind of stuff all full of holes and ribbons. I was up against it for underwear. As it was, I didn't have on any drawers. I grabbed two suits and gave two to George Neil. Damn stuff nearly choked me to death after I got it on. The girl who wore it was smaller than me in a good many places. Four days after I got the stuff Neil and I hit a little stream and thought we'd try to take a bath. Funny as a crutch, the way we looked gettin' out o' the mademoiselle's riggin's. Neil got one arm caught in some lace and got a cramp before he could get loose again.

"Just before daybreak we got orders to move ahead. Most of the hikin' was right down alongside the Marne—river looked like a big red, open sewer. Never hope to see so much filthy water in my life again. Bodies,

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wreckage of all kinds, clothes, empty ammunition cases. A hundred things else, I guess. All floatin' down the stream. The tide washed lots of bodies to shore. Most of them you couldn't recognize, as the water and fishes had eaten their faces and hands off. Only way we could tell what army they belonged to was by parts of equipment and uniforms. Water had faded most of the uniforms, though.

"The woods and river sent up an awful smell. When we came to a windin' road that looked like a brown snake crawlin' up a hill the column turned up it and pretty soon we was in position with the old pieces boomin' away at the flyin' Boches.

"Boche prisoners was pourin' in like smoke pours out of a factory smoke-stack. Some of 'em tried to be friendly. There was damn few smiles they got from us, I can tell you. We were darn tired of their ways of yellin' '*Kamerad!*' and then throwin' them hand grenades at a man.

"The boys was all full o' fun at that. Most of 'em had got hold of high hats, derbies, colored parasols, and a lot of other fool things in Château-Thierry, and the next mornin' they was drivin' along wearin' silk

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hats, carryin' green umbrellas and Lord knows what else. I had a high hat on myself. The Frenchmen thought we was nuts sure enough, goin' to war rigged up like that. But we told 'em '*Say la guerre.*' O. D., the guys in this man's army ain't lettin' no *guerre* get their nannies. I guess most of 'em was brought up just to get in this *guerre* and wallop the Heinies.

" 'Bout twelve bells we started firin'. Just in time to let dinner get cold. Hadn't put over eight rounds before the old coal barges—that's the big shells that Fritz throws at us—began sailin' right in. Third shell struck a shallow dug-out 'bout twenty feet from where our piece was. There was four boys tryin' to *cushay* in that dug-out. They was all in a row, accordin' to the way I heard it. First one nearest us got smashed up 'round the lungs. Olsmo, second lad, got killed outright. He was mashed to pulp in places. Ripped the stomach out of Papan, next to him, and tore Pap's knees clean out of socket. The fourth guy, Thayer, sleepin' jam up to Pap, didn't get a scratch—not a thing. Course he got all bloody from the others. But that wasn't nothin'.

"When we dug 'em out we found Silvia,

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the first lad, dyin'. He *fineed toot sweet.* Just a gasp or so ended him. Olsmo, of course, was stone cold—gashed into tit-bits from head to foot. O. D., he was twisted inside out and then all ground up like hash. Them shells can sure ruin a man. Poor Pap, he got it worse than all. 'Cause it didn't kill him. His legs dangled from threads of flesh. You couldn't see his face on account of the blood that spurted from his chest—covered his face with red. Pap was in some agony, boy, but he had guts. Looked like his pain gave him strength. But guess it was the madness that made him act strong and not the hurtin'. He went insane for a few minutes—then he would quiet down.

"'Olsmo,' he shouted, grittin' his teeth so till it gave me cold shivers. Then he shook cold Olsmo with his blood-drippin' hand. 'Snap into it,' yelled Pap. 'Christ Almighty, man, we can't stay here. It's killin' me. Move! Get that horse out of my way. Cannoneers on the wheels.' He raved until he got so weak he just couldn't whisper. The way Pap stared at us out of them sunken eyes of his was enough to scare a man to death. But when your pals are dyin', sufferin', cussin', prayin', beggin' for water and

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cigarettes, a man ain't got no business to be scared, O. D. That's what kept lots of us goin', I suppose. Pap wanted cigarettes. Had to smoke, he said. Course we gave 'em to him. But as fast as he got one in his mouth he'd throw it away and holler for another.

"The shellin' was goin' on merrily durin' all that time. Our piece was out of action, of course, till we got Pap in the ambulance. Heard later that he didn't pass out for ten hours. Docs claim he was the grittiest man they'd seen in some time. Wasn't time to bury the other lads then. We wrapped 'em in shelter-halves, dug holes and put 'em all in the same grave that night before we pulled to another place.

"We got orders to move three kilos that night and go in another position. Hitched and hooked in 'round five. That gave us time enough to down some 'corn-willy' and black coffee. First we'd had to *monjay* since mornin'. Soon as it was dark we got out on the main road and started. That road was just like Broadway with traffic. Only they don't have so many ambulances goin' up and down Broadway. It was all a man could do to skin himself and horse, or whatever his *cheval* was hooked on to, by the stuff that

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was floodin' down from the first lines. There wasn't no trenches in that war. Just lines, and half the time we didn't know just where in hell the first lines was, 'cause after them doughboys would make three or four kilometers they would be scattered all over creation.

"Column halted near a little village that was all knocked into a cocked hat. There was a few thousand replacements waitin' to go in. All infantry. On one side of the road was a battery of 155 longs. Them things make a noise like a mine explosion and raise a man off his feet when they go off. The horses got scared, naturally, and part of the column got smeared all over the road.

"Just 'bout that time General Edwards comes bowlin' along in his big limousine. He was ridin' on the seat with the driver. The back of the machine was full of sandwiches. Course he couldn't get by on account of the jam-up. Boy, he climbed down and got hold of a first loot who was in the command of the outfit whose horses was raisin' all the hell. Gosh! you ought to heard him give that gink a bawlin'-out.

"'Git this stuff out of my way! Damn quick too! Look in that car. Look!' he

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yelled; honest he was cryin'. 'See what's there, don't you? Somethin' to eat for my boys. Yes, the doughboys. Now move.' O. D. that first loot got on a caisson wheel and strained himself enough to get a discharge from the army. They got the stuff out of the way *toot sweet.*

"General Edwards hadn't no more than got started when the old shells, whizz-bangs, blew in town with an awful noise. Gas came over, too. There was gas alarms goin' enough to wake New York City out of a Sunday-mornin' sleep. Then those cussed Boche planes began dronin' over our heads. Ever heard a bomb explode? No? Well, you're just as well off. They're *pas bon* stuff, O. D.

"The Boches sure must have known that we was right down-stairs under 'em, 'cause they started pullin' up the old tailboards and droppin' 'em every damn minute. Bombs, bombs, and more bombs. They dropped right in the column, knocked ruined houses into our ears, filled your eyes with dirt. Some horses, 'bout ten, got hurt so bad we had to shoot 'em. Think 'bout three men got killed while the jam lasted, but ain't quite sure.

"We moved after a while, and the planes followed us up. Got to the fork of some roads

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and took the one leadin' right down to the Marne. That was just below Mont St. Pierre, a little village. There was a pontoon bridge, one of them boat things, you know—right near where we halted for the night. You can imagine how the Germans was tryin' to pot-shot that bridge. The town was all marbles from shells hittin' it that was aimed at the bridge.

"Time we halted a big boy banged in. Hit in the woods where we was to camp for the night. *Bon* welcome, eh? Stink? Whew! Those woods did reek—had to bury our noses in the ground to get to sleep. Well, the gas came over strong. The Heinies threw bombs down as regular as Christy Mathewson used to heave strikes across the plate—and everybody was scared as hell.

"Don't let any man ever tell you he don't get scared at the front. He's a damn liar if he says he don't get scared. Ain't that you want to run away or lose your guts in the fightin'. No, not that kind of scared stuff. It's like this. There you are waitin' for somethin' to come along and take you off on some strange trip. You know it's goin' to hurt like hell gettin' started, too. It's that uncertain, don't-know stuff that gets you. When

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those bombs are fallin' and you're in a place like we was that night, with no place to go, there's nothin' to do but pull a cheesecloth blanket over your head and try to *cushay*. Ain't much fun, O. D. I had one hell of a toothache and it worried me so much I didn't get a chance to be as scared as I should have been. Funny how a thing like a toothache can take your mind off other troubles.

"Things got so bad toward five bells in the mornin' that the C. O. decided to wake us up and move. But before we could get set to move the shellin' let up and he says, 'Ah, let her go, we'll stay.' Camouflaged the old *cheveaux* and stuff again and hung 'round for breakfast. Course breakfast only meant a thin slice of bacon and a fistful of hardtack. The coffee had given out by that time. You might expect that the supplies could have reached us easy. But gettin' supplies to us was like findin' a nigger in the dark. I swear I believe we were lost durin' most of the Château-Thierry racket. Seems that way, anyhow. For a long time after we left Mont St. Pierre the batteries never did know where the *échelons* were and the *échelons* didn't know where anything was. Mules, drivers, and ration-carts used to get lost every day. That's why we were short of *café*.

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"Put some over from there and got orders to move up in the afternoon. The column had just got formed and was waitin' on the order to pull when a drove of Boche birds headed straight toward us. We knew they were Boches long before they got close enough to fire.

" 'Look at 'em comin',' shouted one guy, and the whole crew popped their eyes out.

"I felt in my bones that we were in for a good lickin' of some kind, but I had my horse to watch out for, so I was tied up, as it were. Lots of the other guys were in the same fix as me, and when the officer yelled, 'Take cover!' we didn't know what in hell to do.

" 'Tie your mounts to a wheel and beat it,' says my platoon commander.

"Didn't ask for any further orders. Tied Jim so hard he couldn't have answered mess-call. Beat it to the edge of the woods and dove under a ration-wagon. The Boches was in range by then and they started a machine-gun barrage. Worst thing I ever was in. They had us by the halter-shanks, and maybe they didn't twist and squeeze! We didn't have nothin' to get back at them birds with. Blooey! The bombs started to fall and bust.

"An M. P. got crowned on the bean. He

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had been walking post on the pontoon bridge. Tumbled right in the river and floated away. Then a bomb lands right in the middle of a caisson team. Horses' legs and wheels was flyin' in all directions. I couldn't find my tin hat and sure was glad that there was two fellows layin' on top of me as the machine-gun bullets was zippin' all 'round us. Everybody was sayin', 'Where in hell is the American birds? Why don't they show?' After the Boches had a big chance to *finee* us and the bridge, and missed out, a flock of Americans and Frenchmen showed up and the Dutchmen beat it *toot sweet.* That was one of the Hairbreath Harry things that we had happen that day. Believe me, there wasn't much time lost in gettin' that column movin' after that. When they counted up the casualties it was found that there was 'bout twelve guys killed, nine wounded, and we lost at least eighteen *chevaux.* There you are, O. D.

"Moved toward Beuvardis that afternoon. That took us northwest from the Marne and farther in toward Swasson (Soissons), our old hunting-grounds. There was some tough fightin' in there, believe me. The Boches began to put up a mean defense; their artillery was in position and the roads sure caught

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hell for a while. I can't remember all the woods and hills we had to take and hold, but there was *beaucoup* and it took *beaucoup* men killed to make them objectives.

"The *monjayin'* got worse all the time and our nerves began to get just like a ragged toothache. So many of the fellows was gettin' bumped off and hit 'round us that a man couldn't help wonderin' if his own name wasn't written on a shell or bullet. I saw fat guys get as lean as a penny stick of candy in a week's time. There wasn't no chance to shave or wash, so we all looked as wild as cannibals soon. I never had any underclothes after I threw away that stuff I got at Château-Thierry. We slept full pack all the time and the cooties had one big party all day and all night. That was the time, durin' the Second Battle of the Marne, that young majors and colonels got gray-headed.

"The second day out from St. Pierre was the day that I had a big argument with a lieutenant who blew by in a Ford. He was wearin' a campaign hat. Course I felt superior like to any man that was wearin' a campaign hat in them days. A campaign lid was the sign of an S. O. S. bird, 'cause we had thrown 'em to the salvage-men months ago.

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"I was ploddin' along 'way behind the column, with Herb Carnes and another guy just as lazy—my horse had been taken by a loot. Course I happened to have my high hat on. I'd lost my overseas cap, also my helmet. The loot blows by. Never thought 'bout salutin' him. That kind of stuff is a joke up at the front, especially in a drive. He stops *toot sweet* and calls us back.

"'Why don't you salute an officer?' he asks me.

"'Salute?' says I, kinda dumfounded. 'Hell, we don't go in for that kind of stuff in this sector,' I told him. You ought to seen that man's face.

"'How long have you men been over here?'

"'Eleven months. How long have you been here?' I knew he had just landed. His Sam Browne was new-lookin'.

"'How does New York look without any lights now?' asked Carnes.

"Say, that officer must have felt like fifty *centimes*. He saw my high hat 'bout that time.

"'Take that hat off. It isn't regulation,' says the second looey to me.

"'Regulation's out of style up here,' says

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"'TAKE THAT HAT OFF. IT ISN'T REGULATION,' SAYS THE SECOND LOOEY TO ME".

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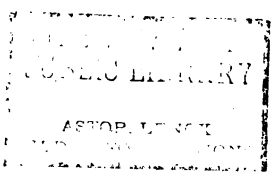

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I. 'It's all I got; can't take a chance of gettin' sunstruck.'

"'Don't give a damn, take it off,' he commands.

"I tipped my hat to him, bowed, and says, 'Yes, sir.' We moved on. 'Bout thirty minutes later he blows by again and sees the hat on me.

"'Didn't I tell you to take that hat off?' he yells.

"'Yes, sir,' I yelled back, and tipped my hat again.

"Never saw that gink after that, but it just goes to show you how some of them guys fought the *guerre*, runnin' 'round in Fords tryin' to get salutes and make things, O. D. You never see any of our officers doin' that kinda stuff. They know that it's all bunk after bein' with the boys in the lines.

"Beauvardis, or just beyond it a few kilos, is where Cap. Davis got it. We was 'way up close to the front lines there. Had us in front of the light pieces. There was a regiment of seventy-fives right behind us. We went into position in a place where the Boches must have had a gun position, as the place was littered up with their equipment and *beaucoup* dead Germans. I didn't get in until

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late in the night, right in the middle of a barrage that the seventy-fives was puttin' up. The woods was ringin' with a noise that sounded as if the devils themselves was shoutin' and yellin' down in hell and we was gettin' a loud echo of it. Before us the whole country was lit up by a big fire from a burnin' German ammunition dump. Sure was weird in them woods. I asked where I was to *cushay,* and Frank Reynolds, top-kick, says, 'Anywhere 'round here.' Bickford and I drops our load, spread the blankets, and tried to *cushay.* No human bein' could sleep much in that place. But we managed to cork off a little now and then. The woods smelled rotten.

"When daylight came I looked over my head and saw an arm pointin' right down at me. There wasn't no head or body. Just that one arm. I got up quick as hell. Found out I had been restin' my head against a dead Boche all night. Felt like runnin', but was afraid I might run right into the German lines. They was only a few yards away over a little hill.

"That mornin' we got more movin' orders. Our doughboys had already been relieved by the Forty-second Division infantry, as they

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were all shot to hell. I'll bet that there wasn't a full battalion left in any regiment. The Rainbow doughboys can fight, now, buddy, I ain't jokin'. They made us artillery hump to keep up with 'em, too. But guess we did, as most of 'em said our barrages was as good to go over under as an umbrella is in the rain. There ain't much use tellin' much more. Course, as I said, Cap. Davis got picked near Beauvardis. He was steppin' out of his P. C. when a shell fragment knocked him cold. Funny how all good men get it so quick. He was only a kid, but, believe me, he had guts and could handle a battery.

"We got up to Sergy Plateau and cleaned the Germans off that place and they relieved us. We had been in the drive from July fifteenth to August fourth—that's a long time to battle, O. D. Accordin' to reports, we gained 'bout twenty-five kilometers against the Boches. Not bad, eh?" concluded Jimmy, starting to stretch.

"Gee! you had some war experience, Jimmy. They sure must have given you a long rest and furlough after all that time at the front."

"Rest? Hell, man, there ain't no such thing in this man's army. Time we got pulled out

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of Château-Thierry we went back to La Ferté and waited there for trains to take us to a rest area I got transferred back to Battery C there. We was only in that rest area ten days and while there I'll bet we did more work than at the front. We had hikes every day and drillin'. They even tried to pull that salutin' stuff again. Only good thing 'bout the rest area was that we could take a bath, as there was *beaucoup* little creeks 'round, and of course it's warm here in August. On the tenth day I was standin' on a big lawn with Samson and a couple of other guys lookin' at the divisional minstrel. Right in the middle of the song up jumps the C. O. of the regiment and bawls out, 'Men we're off to another fight!' He must have been an actor in civil life 'cause he sure did pull the old dramatic stuff; believe he waited just for that minute to spill the beans 'bout movin' to another front. That night we was on the old road hikin'. Got on another French train. Hit Bar-le-Duc two days ago, started hikin' this way yesterday mornin' and I got lost from the gang last night. That's all there is to it, O. D. Just waitin' for the *guerre* to *finee* now. Then we'll get a seven-day leave, *purtet* —that's what the Frogs say for perhaps.

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What do you say to a little *cushayin'*, O. D.? I get kinda drowsy in the eyes 'round *nerver* —used to hittin' the blankets 'bout seven bells every night now, tryin' to make up for time lost at Château-Thierry." Jimmy yawned to show how true his statement was.

"Jimmy, you don't mind if I tell some of the things you said to Mary and mother in my next letter, do you?" asked O. D., as he was pullin' his hobnails off.

"No—just so long as you don't hit the *guerre* stuff too hard. That red, battle-front stuff ain't good for their hearts, you *savvy?* Gets 'em all scared for nothin'," cautioned Jimmy.

Both boys were tired and they were almost asleep when Jimmy stirred and blurted out:

"Say, O. D., I forgot to tell you that you're liable to get *beaucoup* cooties *cushayin'* with me. I'm crawlin'."

"I'll get them sooner or later, anyhow, won't I?" asked O. D.

"Sure thing," assured the man with cooties.

"Then I might just as well get used to them *toot sweet,*" declared the man who was about to find out just what the thing that Jimmy McGee called the *guerre* really meant.

"That's the right dope. You won't be long

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gettin' on the front if you're willin' to learn. *Bon swoir,* O. D." Jimmy felt mighty proud of his new pupil, then he dropped off and forgot the *guerre* in a dream of Mary Preston.

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XI

A CRAW DE GUERRE

"*BONJOUR,* O. D. How did you *cu-shay?*" was Jimmy McGee's greeting to O. D. the next morning as he came out of a sound sleep.

"Great sleeping in these beds, Jimmy. Don't know just how I'll get out. Gee! I'm down about four feet.

"Yep. You've got to be a regular three-ring circus acrobat to climb out of a French *lee* without hurtin' yourself," admitted Jimmy as he got a good hold on the side of the bed and pulled himself out.

O. D. followed his example, but experienced quite a lot of difficulty in doing so.

"I'll ask madame to fix us up a little *petit dayjunay* of some kind before we hit the road again. Course a *petit dayjunay* ain't any too much in a marchin' man's stomach. Means a bowl of *café* and a slice of bread. We may be lucky to-day and run across a truck-driver who'll give us a lift. Them kind

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of guys are mighty scarce in this army. Frenchmen will give you a lift before an American. Unless, of course, he belongs to your division."

While Jimmy was winding his last puttee on, the madame came in the room and asked him if he and his friend would eat. Jimmy told her *oui* and the woman clattered out to prepare the *café*.

"Now what do you think of *café-ooo-lay*, O. D.?" asked Jimmy as he raised his bowl to finish what was left.

"*Trey*—" O. D. stammered as if he had forgotten just what he intended to say.

"*Trey-beans*, you want to say. That means very good in French," prompted Jimmy.

"Thanks. I'll get it after a while, I guess. But say, is beans a French word, too?"

"No. Don't believe it is. But sounds enough like French to use it O. K. The Frogs understand it all right. Well, we'll get strapped up and on the way. Got to try and make the outfit to-day. There's somethin' up in our comin' up here so sudden and we can't afford to miss anythin'. Got a hunch, O. D., that the Boches is goin' to get an awful beatin' up in these parts. Heard Frenchmen say it wasn't possible to drive the Germans out of

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the positions they've got 'round Verdun and St. Mihiel. Put a bunch of Americans in there. I'll bet all the pay they owe me, and that's three months now, that we'll take Metz. Say, O. D., I 'ain't got over four francs. How are you set on *frankers?*"

"I just got paid a few days ago. Let's see," said O. D., counting his money. "Oh, about sixty-five francs. How much do you want?"

"I'll ask madame how much we owe," answered Jimmy. "*Madame, combien?*"

The madame told him to wait a minute. She got an old pencil and a piece of paper and started figuring.

"It's a fact, O. D., these Frogs can't tell you how much a glass of *van rouge* costs without workin' it out on paper. Ain't it the limit. Look at her now."

Finally the madame reached a conclusion of figures.

"*Dix francs,*" she told Jimmy.

"That's ten francs or two dollars," interpreted Jimmy to O. D.

O. D. gave her a ten-franc note without another word.

"That's five francs I owe you, O. D. Keep 'count of that, will you?"

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"Forget it, Jimmy. What I've got is yours. *Compree?*" asked O. D., showing the effect of association with McGee in his language.

"Gee! you're gettin' the stuff great. Well, we're off. *Bonjour, madame. Merci beaucoup,*" said Jimmy, shaking hands with the madame. O. D. did the same and mumbled something that sounded like *"Banjo."*

"Au revoir, messieurs," responded the old woman.

Down the village street they ambled like a pair of old comrades.

Just as they were getting near the last house on the *Grande Rue* a couple of American soldiers came out of a barn door. Hay was sticking to their clothes and around their necks and heads. They approached Jimmy and O. D.

"What outfit, buddy?" asked the first one to Jimmy.

"Twenty-sixth division. Know where any of the Twenty-sixth is 'bout here?" was Jimmy's question.

"You're gang got a YD painted on all your stuff?"

"Oui," answered Jimmy.

"Well, there was artillery passed through

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here yesterday noon—*beaucoup* of it—whole regiment about. Say have you seen anything of the Twenty-eighth Division? We got lost a few days ago. 'Ain't been able to locate 'em yet."

"No, can't say I know where you're outfit is. Which way did that artillery go?"

"Straight up the Verdun road toward Souilly. Find anything to *monjay* or drink here?" asked the Twenty-eighth Division man.

"*Oui*, got *beaucoup pom du tear fritz, dey zerfs*, and *van rouge* down the line there," and Jimmy pointed out the house where he and O. D. had spent the night.

"*Merci.* Well, be good and take care. Just out of Château-Thierry, ain't you?"

"*Oui.* So long, fellows!" answered Jimmy, and he and O. D. hiked on toward Verdun.

During the course of two kilometers three trucks passed the hikers. Chances of riding looked *pas bons* to them when another truck appeared on the crest of a high hill, making toward them.

"Maybe this guy'll have a heart. We'll stop here and look tired as hell," said Jimmy, stopping on the roadside.

The truck came closer.

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"Hell afire! Believe it's a YD truck, O. D."

"How 'bout a lift, buddy?" shouted Jimmy as the truck was almost up to them.

The driver slowed down and let them climb on.

"What outfit, buddy?" he asked Jimmy.

"One Hundred and Third Field Artillery, Jack."

"Thought you looked like a YD man," answered the driver as he changed gears.

They made about four kilometers when the driver complained of feeling hot. He stopped his truck and started taking off his leather jerkin. There was a Croix de Guerre pinned over his heart. O. D. saw it and his eyes bulged out.

"I see you're a hero," said O. D., pointing to the bronze medal attached to the green ribbon.

"Hero, hell!" exclaimed the driver. "Anybody can get one of these things. The Frogs wear 'em as souvenirs of the *guerre*. You can buy a dozen for a few francs. I was lucky enough to have this one given to me," he explained.

"What did you do, swipe a bag of white sugar and give it to some French general?" asked Jimmy.

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"Well, I'll tell you, buddy, this thing was given to me for bravery under fire and devotion to duty. That's the way the paper read, anyhow. I was drivin' up to Château-Thierry in this junk with some bread. Got pretty near Saacy when I run into *beaucoup* shell-fire. The big boys was bustin' ahead of me and behind me—all around me. Wasn't anything else to do so I climbs down and gets under the engine, thinkin' that the truck would give me a bit of protection from splinters. Had on my jumpers and in my jumpers was a little hammer. Lucky for me it was. A bunch of Frogs includin' a colonel gets chased out of the woods by shells. Happens that they come straight toward me. I had sense enough to start tinkerin' with the engine so as to leave a good impression. The colonel spots me. He could talk some English. Tells me all kinds of bull about bein' brave under shell-fire. I didn't spoil his speech by tellin' him I was scared to death. He takes my name and outfit. Few weeks later I get a paper citin' me and givin' me right to wear a Craw de Guerre. Well, I stayed right under there tappin' away until the shellin' quit, which happened *toot sweet*. Can you beat it? The *guerre's* a farce so long as it don't get you, eh, buddy?" to Jimmy.

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"I'll say so. That's what I tell my friend here. He 'ain't never been up yet," answered Jimmy.

"Never seen the front, eh, Jack?" this to O. D.

"No, not yet," admitted O. D.

"Well, you'll be disappointed if you're lookin' for all that you heard tell about. Once you get used to starvin', wearin' one suit of underclothes about three months, and *cushay-in'* out in any old mud-hole there won't be much excitement for you. All the other things depend on your own good luck. If the Kaiser 'ain't got your number you'll pull through without a scratch. I know. I was in the infantry not long ago."

Jimmy and the Yankee division truck-driver fought the battles of Château-Thierry all over again while O. D. listened and didn't miss a word. The things that the veterans talked and laughed about caused his mind a thousand and one perplexities. He had always formed his ideas and pictures of the front according to the suggestion and impressions of men and women who painted the existence on the lines as a red hell-life of misery and sufferings.

He could only conceive the front as a sinister, shadowy place, abounding in terrors and

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hardships, where men were fighting one another day and night, while the guns roared away incessantly. But beside him were two boys who spoke of the front as if it were a playground of strange adventure where by mere accident, rather than by deliberate execution, men were killed or wounded. He was certain, instinctively, that these boys knew what they were talking of. He knew that men cannot tell about living with death, while laughing and singing of life, unless they have actually done such a thing.

O. D. heard Jimmy tell of buying a suit of underclothes at La Ferté, after his outfit had been taken out of the fight shattered to the bone from continual battling. He judged from the way Jimmy said it that he would remember buying that forty-franc suit of underclothes when his memory of the capture of Hill 190 would grow dim. Jimmy cussed more because the army was unable to give him underclothes at that time than he did over the fact that he had to lug ninety-five-pound shells on a stomach that had been empty for twenty-four hours.

O. D. wondered if he would ever be able to understand the life of the front as his new friend Jimmy did. He wondered if there was

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enough good stuff in him to make him accept his burden of front-line work like the other men who had already gone in and proved themselves. O. D. wondered a hundred things that were all closely associated with the fact that he was about to enter a life that would bring him face to face with supreme sacrifice. Like a hundred thousand other American boys, before and after him, O. D. saw the bigness of the test that awaited every young novice on the battle-field, and he was concerned only with the one question: "Can I make good?"

"Well, here we are at Heippes," said the driver, cutting a story of the capture of Vaux short. "Your outfit's up 'round Souilly, I think. I turn off here and go out toward Rambluzen. Be good, Jack, and take care of your friend here," indicating O. D.

"*Oui,* bet your life. *Au revoir,* old man," answered Jimmy.

"Thanks," said O. D.

"Not at all, Jack; glad to give you a lift," shouted the driver, and he was off.

"That's a regular guy," said Jimmy. "You take any fellow that's been through what we have and he's damn glad to help a guy out. He knows himself what it is to be hungry

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and tired. This old war's teachin' a few guys that there's others in the world besides themselves. Guess it's time to *monjay.* Take a look for the *café* here. Hold it here a minute. I'll ask this M. P. guy where a man can get a bite." Jimmy headed for an M. P.

"Say, Jack, where's there a place to *monjay* 'round here?" he asked.

"Couldn't tell you, buddy. Only been here a week," answered the M. P.

"A week," repeated Jimmy. "What do you have to do, spend a winter in a place to find out where the grub is? Have you seen artillery go by here lately?"

"Nope—nothin' lately—in three days or so."

"What was it, seventy-fives or one hundred and fifty-fives—big or little? What?"

"Don't remember," answered the M. P. as he motioned a car to go by.

"Hell afire, O. D., I knew it. Those M. P.'s don't even know there's a *guerre* goin' on," said Jimmy, with disgust. "Follow me, I'll find somethin' *toot sweet,*" and Jimmy McGee started toward a house about one hundred feet away.

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XII

O. D. MEETS JIMMY'S GANG

AFTER going through the same old stuff with the madame, Jimmy, with the help of Gabrielle, madame's nineteen- year-old daughter, finally succeeded in arranging for a dinner of *pomme de terre frites* and an omelet.

While they were washing up a little bit, Gabrielle told Jimmy that there were three Americans sleeping in the house. The girl told him that the Americans had arrived the night before, tired out and hungry. None of them had got up yet, she told him.

Jimmy was just taking a man's share of the potatoes when the door in front of him opened.

"Jimmy McGee! You old son of a gun! What in hell!"

"George Neil!" shouted Jimmy as he rushed at the new-comer and nearly bowled him off his feet. "How did you get in here?"

"*Cushayed* too long and the outfit left me

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back in some little joint ten kilos or so from Bar-le-Duc. Joyce and Pop Rigney are still *cushayin'*. Who's your friend?" asked Neil, pointing to O. D.

"Oh, hell, I almost forgot. This is O. D. Picked him up yesterday; he's goin' to the outfit as a replacement. Meet my pal, George Neil, O. D."

"Glad to know you, sergeant," said O. D., shaking Neil's outstretched hand.

"Forget the sergeant stuff, old man. Glad to meet anybody that Jimmy McGee knows. But what did you say that your name was?"

"It's William G. Preston, but Jimmy—," answered O. D.

"I changed it to O. D. Don't you think that's better, George. Look at the way he's rigged up," interrupted Jimmy.

"You're right, Jimmy. Where did you enlist from, O. D.?" asked Neil.

"He was drafted. But that don't make any difference. Wasn't his fault he didn't volunteer. I got his whole story and it's straight. He's one of us from now on and I'm goin' to get him in the outfit," declared Jimmy.

"Good stuff—shake on that, O. D.," and George Neil shook hands with the drafted man to show him how he felt.

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"Messieurs, voluez-vous manger?" (Messieurs, will you eat?)

"Bet your life. *Oui, mademoiselle, toot sweet,"* answered McGee as he began getting chairs up to the table.

"Let those two mopes *cushay.* We'll *monjay* and then call 'em out," suggested Neil.

In answer to his suggestion the door of the room that he had been sleeping in opened and a bald head stuck out.

"Look out, Pop—cover that bald dome up. You're too old to be goin' 'round uncovered," warned Jimmy.

"I'll show you how old I am if I get skinned out of those *poms* and *dey zerfs,"* shot back Pop Rigney, as he pulled his bald head behind the protection of the door. He began talking to Joyce, who was still in bed, and the men at the table knew that Pop was warning him to dash for the table unless he wanted to starve.

The meal progressed as all meals do when young American soldiers are eating in a French home, with much misunderstanding as to the exact meaning of the things that are said in the French and English languages. Gabrielle laughed over their funny way of talking her native language and tried to

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help matters by using her only stock and store of English, which was represented by the words "yes" and "finish."

"I want some water myself," admitted Jimmy, after finishing his meal, "but I'm scared to ask for it after last night."

"I'll ask her," volunteered Neil.

"Gabrielle," he called.

She answered with a big, wonderful smile and came over to him.

"*Donnay mwa* glass *de low*," was Neil's way of telling her his want.

Gabrielle looked helplessly at the empty dishes. A little frown of perplexity showed on her forehead. Gradually the frown was camouflaged by a spreading smile of understanding light.

"Oh, finish?" she asked him.

"Great Lord, 'ain't she got wonderful blue eyes!" ejaculated Neil. "Some of these peasant girls are sure the darb. Wish I could *parley* her talk."

"I'll get that water myself," said Jimmy, rising. He found a glass and went outside to look for a pump. Gabrielle watched him smilingly, wishing that she could comprehend the wants of the big, good-natured American

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boys with whom she found it so easy to make friends.

" 'Ain't been over long, have you?" asked Neil of O. D. as Jimmy disappeared through the doorway.

"Just about two months. Spent all my time down at the replacement camps waiting to be sent to some outfit."

"Well, you are gettin' in with a darn good outfit and Jimmy's a great guy for a friend. He'll show you 'round the front."

"Guess I'll feel kind of funny going up there with all you fellows that are used to it," said O. D.

"Not at all; you'll never know the difference. Two or three days and you'll think you've been there all your life. After a month you'll hardly ever know you used to live in a house back in the States. Gets in your blood. Just like the mud up there gets all over you. Make friends with the cooties. Then you're all set," explained Neil.

"Jerk aloose from that table and let two good men *monjay,*" shouted Pop Rigney and Joyce, pushing their door open and making for what was left in one of the dishes.

"Meet Jimmy's friend, O. D. This is Pop Rigney, the oldest man in this man's army,

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and the other fellow is Joyce, our supply sergeant." The men shook hands all around and sat down.

"I got that water. Had to walk almost a mile to find it," said Jimmy, entering. "Well, Rigney, you old bald-headed monkey, you got up, eh? Guess Joyce's mess-hound appetite did it. Well, you can *monjay* what I left."

Rigney and Joyce got enough by accepting odds and ends. When they finished it was agreed that the party move on and catch the outfit.

"*Combien, Gabrielle?*" asked Jimmy.

"*Dix france, pour tous,*" she answered. (Ten francs for everything.)

"Not bad at all. Gettin' kinda sick of the highway-robbery stuff. Guess you'll have to pay, George; I'm flat," said Jimmy.

"*Oui,*" answered Neil. He gave Gabrielle three five-franc notes and told her to keep the change.

"*Monsieur, vous donney trop!* (you give too much, monsieur) she told him, insisting that he take what was over and above.

"Forget it," refusing the returned money.

"*Merci bien, monsieur,*" answered Gabrielle.

Au revoirs were quickly said. The little

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party of Yanks started off in the general direction of Verdun over the great white highway that many Frenchmen call the "Sacred Road."

"Got any idea where the outfit is, Joyce?" asked O. D., after two kilometers had been left behind with their hobnail tracks.

"Heard they're right near Souilly. Believe they'll hang there a day or so and then go into the lines. Big stuff on up here. Heard about it?"

"Lot of rumors 'bout a big smash, but nothin' certain. What dope did you get?" asked Jimmy.

"Nothin' but that everybody from the big guys down are looking for a drive to start and go through to Metz. Dope is we start the push on early in September, about the tenth or so. 'Ain't got any too much time."

"Guess we'll be right up in the front end of this thing. Better get us some new *chevaux*. I'm tired listening to that 'Cannoneer on the Wheel,' stuff," snorted Rigney.

"If it'll end this *guerre* any quicker I'm with 'em to drive all winter," declared Jimmy.

O. D. listened to his new friends talk about driving and pushing, and many other things that happen only at the front, with the feeling

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that he was a rank outsider in their company. They spoke so casually of attacking the Germans and taking Metz that O. D. could not dissuade himself from believing that at times war must be a sort of picnic. Yet something told him that while these men spoke as lightly as they did of fighting they knew the hell of it, too. He wondered again and again if when it came his time to learn, as they had done before him, he would be able to accept the fun and hell just as they did. That thought worried O. D. more than anything else.

"How far is that place where you think the outfit is?" asked old Pop Rigney. The five kilometers that brought them to another little village had brought some aches and weariness to his aging limbs.

"Another kilometer or two, I guess," answered Joyce.

"Better grab a truck. You don't know where we're going," was Rigney's suggestion.

"Gosh! There's a Y. M. C. A. sign. Let's go over and get some cigarettes. No tellin' if we'll ever see them again. Gettin' up close now, you know," warned Jimmy.

"We're off," said Neil.

The quintet made for the Y. M. C. A. hut.

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"Any cigarettes?" asked Joyce of the man behind the canteen counter.

"Not to-day. All out of smokings," was the disappointing answer.

"Any chocolate or cookies?" questioned Jimmy.

"Expect stuff in to-morrow. Hard to get transportation," curtly.

"Oh, well. We'll live through it," said Jimmy.

Once outside Pop Rigney said what he thought.

"What the hell is wrong with them guys? Always the same old stuff—'Out to-day; come to-morrow. I'm off 'em," declared Pop.

"Damn if I know. Look at the Château-Thierry times when we never was able to get the stuff. I'm for the Salvation Army every time," announcd Jimmy.

"We used to have darn good Y. M. C. A.'s back at the replacement camps. Always had lots of cigarettes, chocolate, and cakes. Twice a week we had pictures and shows," stated O. D.

"Sure, 'way back in the S. O. S.—why wouldn't they have everything? What good is that doin' the guys up at the front where you can't buy the stuff. Just like the eats and

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clothes. Back in the States I guess the folks think that all the good stuff goes up to the fightin' men. Like hell it does," snapped Jimmy.

A big green truck approached them.

"Hell, there's the Regimental Supply truck. Let's climb on," shouted Neil as he started running to meet the camion.

"Make it fast, boys," said Champ, the driver, "I got to get back to camp and make another trip for supplies before night. We're movin' up to-morrow, you know."

"Good stuff. Where 're we goin'? Anybody know?" asked Jimmy.

"Yep; near a place that sounds like Rupt. Something else tacked onto it, but don't remember. We're goin' to start this drive soon."

"Gettin' any fresh beef in for supplies now?" asked Joyce.

"*Beaucoup* 'canned willy'; that's about all," replied Champ.

"Get ready to *monjay* that stuff another two months, I guess. Wouldn't it give a man a pain!" groaned Neil.

"There's the gang over yonder along that road. See 'em?" asked Champ, pointing to a road over to the left.

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"*Oui,* pretty good camouflage; but you can tell it," answer Jimmy.

"I don't see anything. Where do you mean?" asked O. D.

"All along that road. See the tree branches and stuff that looks like it's growin' out in the road. That's the guns and stuff. They're camouflaged on account of Boche planes. The horses are down in the woods some place," explained Jimmy.

"I see now what you mean. Gee! that camouflage is fine stuff; I'd never know it was anything from here," admitted O. D.

"You'll pick camouflage from the real stuff *toot sweet,* O. D; don't worry."

"Say, we better hit the road here and slip in. Some boob may ask what we're doin' blowin' in at this time of day," suggested Joyce.

The crew acted on his advice and approached the camp from the woods.

Just before gaining the fringe of road where pieces, caissons, wagons, and a lot of equipment were hidden beneath newly cut branches, a bugle blasted out "Attention!"

"A Boche plane goin' over. That means take cover, O. D.," explained McGee.

A few minutes later the bugle sounded recall

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and everybody went about their business with little ado.

Jimmy brought O. D. up to Regimental Headquarters, and by a little stroke of army diplomacy got Sergeant-Major Creamer to assign him to Battery C. Later he went to the captain with Jimmy and asked that O. D. be assigned to the same section as himself.

"Put him in your gun crew, if you want to. You've got to be acting gunner-corporal now. Corporal Schott went to the hospital with fever," said the captain.

"*Trey-beans,*" answered Jimmy. "Thanks *beaucoup.*"

"Not at all," answer the C. O.

"Great guy, our old man," Jimmy told O. D. when they got out of the captain's hearing. "Just like one of the fellows all the time. We call him Pop Henderson. He knows it, too. I believe you could call him Pop to his face and he'd take it all right. Course we don't, you know. He's too good. Bunch of officers like him in this outfit. There 're cranks and bums in every profession, but our officers are pretty much the darb. Get that way after bein' up at the front with you a long time, you see."

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"Seemed mighty nice," said O. D. "Where are we going to sleep to-night, Jimmy?"

"Oh, we'll rig up our shelter-halves and *cushay* in the woods some place. Won't be as good as that Frog bed we hit last night, but *say la guerre,* you know O. D."

"I'm willing, Jimmy."

"This place is as good as any, I guess," said Jimmy, examining the ground with his foot. "There's a few damn loots in the way, but if you get yourself wrapped around then you'll *cushay bon.*"

Jimmy didn't try to put the tent up in regulation way. He got a few small branches, a stick or two, and with the poles that O. D. had he made a shelter that would at least keep some wind away or afford protection against rain.

"I lost all my pins and poles 'round Château-Thierry," he said in apology for using his bayonet as a tent-pin.

Jimmy had two blankets and O. D. had three. They spread them all out on the ground, tucked in the end near the opening of the tent and crawled between the blankets, leaving two between them and the earth.

"Roll your blouse up and use it for a pillow. Generally I use my gas-mask, some-

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times my tin hat, for a pillow, if it's cold and I'm alone. Neil and I used to *cushay* together, but he can hang with Pop or Joyce, as he knows how to get along here."

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XIII

"WE'RE GOIN' TO TAKE METZ."

O. D. turned restlessly for a long time before he could adapt his body to the topography of the ground that was his bed. He had funny feelings in his joints as if something was grinding against the bones, especially when he remained in one position long. Jimmy's snoring told him that his new friend was asleep.

The new-comer to the environs of the front lay awake almost two hours. He thought of home, of his mother, of Mary, and of what was before him. Now and then a distant rumbling as if thunder was muttering in far-away skies came to his ears.

Jimmy had explained the rumbling as being the noise of guns that were perhaps twenty kilometers away. O. D. couldn't put down the idea that he was near the front, the thing that he had been working toward since becoming a soldier. The idea gripped him so strongly that he couldn't stay the restless

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feelings which worked through his veins fire-like.

He sat up, reached for his shoes, slipped them on, and crawled out of the tent.

The night was singularly clear for France. A growing moon and myriad stars had purged the world of shadows and given it a generous possession of silver light. Except for the soft noises made by the horses and the occasional rumble that came from the hills of Verdun, the night was quiet and suggestive of peaceful repose.

O. D. looked and listened at the things of the night. A sentry strolled leisurely along the road where the guns of his regiment were camouflaged. Far in front of him a chain of golden rockets climbed against the horizon and disappeared as if by magic. The thing that O. D. had thought was thunder came to his ears again. Then all was so quiet that he could hear Jimmy sleeping.

"I'm almost at the front," soliloquized the man to himself. "No one else seems to know it, or feel it, but me. Guess I better try to sleep." He turned to go back in the pup tent.

A soft, subdued thing like the drone of a bee rose and fell on the night air. O. D.

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jumped forward a trifle, startled by the sinister beelike noise that seemed almost overhead.

Rat-tat-tat-tat! B-o-o-m! B-o-o-m! Rat-tat-tat-tat!

The peace of the night ended in the fierce barking of machine-guns and the crash of anti-air-craft cannon. Between shots, the soft droning that came from the skies continued in a casual, business-like way that caused cold perspiration to come unbidden to O. D.'s forehead.

B—A—N—G!

A bomb exploded about four hundred yards from where O. D. stood, and the ground quivered beneath him.

The sound of waking men stirred him to speak.

"What—— What is it?" he asked.

"Nothin' but a Boche plane droppin' bombs. They're goin' at him with the archies, but might just as well use pea-shooters. Never get a plane with that stuff," came the answer from a dark part of the woods.

W-h-i-r-r!

Something was passing directly overhead. O. D. looked up. He saw a black shadow flit between himself and the moon. Then another

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bomb exploded. O. D. dived into the tent. He landed on Jimmy.

"What the hell's up?" asked Jimmy, coming out of sleep.

"Listen," whispered O. D. in a hoarse voice.

Jimmy listened.

"Nothin' but some Boche planes, I guess. They'll never get us, but I hate 'em just the same. Turn over and let's *cushay encore.*"

O. D. lay down again, but did not sleep until the droning had ceased and the guns had become quiet. Fatigue finally overpowered his senses and he fell into deep slumber.

"Wake up, O. D. Time to *monjay.*" Jimmy, fully dressed, was bending over O. D.

"What—— Oh—— Time to get up and eat, eh? What have they got for breakfast, Jimmy?"

"Bacon, hardtack, and coffee. The coffee's got sugar in it for a wonder. Make it fast or we'll get nothin' but seconds."

Sitting bolt upright in the little tent, O. D. took account of the fact that Jimmy was all ready and showed signs of having been up some time.

"You have been up and around, Jimmy;

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why didn't you wake me up before?" asked O. D.

"What's the use? You'll get enough early rising before you're through with this outfit. Might as well beat the army out of a little sleep when you can. When you come down to brass tacks about it, every time you *cushay* late and *monjay* a lot you're makin' yourself stronger and a better man for the army work. *Cushay* all you can, O. D. We had to get up at six and feed them soft-headed horses and bring 'em down to a little lake to water. Come on if you're set and we'll beat it up to the mess-line."

O. D. and Jimmy, mess-kits and cups in hand, found their way through the woods to the long line of hungry men that extended from the smoking, rolling kitchen to a point almost one hundred yards away.

O. D. had never looked upon such a motley group of American soldiers since entering the army. Most of the boys were in their shirt-sleeves. Some wore leggings and some did not. Half of them did not have caps or hats on. They were all mud-splashed. Everybody was either talking or laughing.

"When are we goin' to eat?" asked one man near the end of the line. A rattle of

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mess-kits followed that question, and soon the entire mess-line began to bawl out the cooks and kitchen police in general.

"Look at the ears on him!" shouted a Yank. A chorus of laughs followed.

O. D., falling in line behind Jimmy, heard that remark and turned red in the face.

"Why did he say that, Jimmy? Are my ears big, or what?" he asked.

Jimmy laughed.

"They're not talkin' 'bout you, O. D. That's just a sayin' in this man's army which is more popular 'round mess-time than any other. Don't worry 'bout these guys gettin' fresh with you," answered Jimmy.

The top-sergeant stopped Jimmy and O. D. as they were making their way back from mess.

"Say, Jimmy, is this the new guy?" asked the top, indicating O. D.

"*Oui.* Pop Henderson said I could get him in my crew."

"*Trey-beans.* You'll fix him up, then. Have you had any time on the guns?" he asked O. D.

"No. I was in the infantry."

"What about that, Jimmy?"

"I'll show him 'round that baby of ours.

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He don't need no trainin' for the job I'm goin' to give him," declared McGee.

"Well, be good to him. Luck to you, old man," and the top hurried away to scare up some details for grooming the horses.

"We pull up to-night, O. D.—not right into the front, you know. About three kiloflappers from where our positions will be. So I want to get down to the piece and look her over. Got to get Betsy in great shape for this drive. We're goin' to take Metz. You heard that, didn't you?"

"Yes, but I thought Metz was the German's stronghold and a long ways off," answered O. D.

"*Oui.* What of it? We'll take it all right. Wait till this old Yankee army gets loose at 'em." Jimmy spoke with a confidence which O. D. hadn't yet learned to grasp.

The day was spent by Jimmy in cleaning and getting Betsy, his faithful Schneider howitzer of 155-millimeter range, in condition for the work that was in store for it. O. D. got a chance to familiarize his fingers and sight with the parts that were henceforth to engage his attention while a member of Jimmy McGee's gun crew.

A few minutes before supper final moving

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orders were announced. The regiment was to hike twenty-four kilometers and camouflage in a woody valley near Rupt-en-Woevre.

Jimmy, standing around with O. D. and Neil, hearing the orders, remarked.

"Can you imagine this stuff back in the States? Suppose a guy blew in your office just before supper and told you to grab your typewriter and hike eighteen miles or so. Why, man, you'd throw him down ten flights of stairs. Over here they tell you to load up with a hundred pounds of junk and hike twenty-odd kilometers, and you do it like you was goin' off to a dance. Don't know what the hell we'll do when we do get back."

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XIV

"WELL, WE'RE HERE."

AFTER the usual amount of orders and rescinding of orders had been accomplished the regiment was lined up in a column of three battalions and awaited the command "forward."

Just as the sun fell behind the green hills of Verdun and the shadows of night began to fill the valleys a long column of American artillery started rolling toward the lines of the St. Mihiel sector. Jimmy McGee and William G. Preston, alias O. D., loaded down under their equipment and carrying canes, followed behind Betsy, the third piece of Battery C, humming the chorus of "Where Do We Go from Here, Boys?"

It was two o'clock in the morning when the regiment reached its rendezvous in a wooded valley near Rupt-en-Woevre. The sky had become clouded and the early morning was jet black.

"Guess we'll get soaked, O. D.," pro-

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phesied Jimmy when they halted and got a chance to observe the weather conditions.

"Will we stay here now?" asked O. D.

"*Oui.* Might just as well scare up a place to *cushay.* Wait here; I'll look 'round."

A little while later Jimmy returned with the news that there was nothing to do but put the pup tent up again and sleep on the ground.

"There's one barrack here, but the First Battalion guys grabbed that as they got here first," he explained.

Jimmy and O. D. put the tent up on the slope of a hill that formed the eastern side of the valley in which the horses and *matériel* of the entire regiment were hidden.

O. D. heard, in a sort of indifferent manmer, the growl of big guns that seemed very near. He was startled once or twice by the crash of bombs and the anti-air-craft guns. But he was too tired to lend ears and thoughts to such things on his first night at the front, for the regiment was only a few kilometers from the first lines. O. D. fell asleep immediately and didn't wake until three hours later when a downpour of rain splashed him from head to foot.

The wind that accompanied the rain swept the tent away time and time again. Every-

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thing that Jimmy and O. D. owned got soaked. The earth beneath them turned into crawling slime Finally, seeing the impossibility of keeping the tent up, Jimmy told his friend to pull his shelter-half over him, head and all. Jimmy did likewise with his shelter-half and blankets. The two boys, wrapped in canvas and blankets, lay in the deluge like two muffled mummies, trying to sleep.

Instead of moving into position at once the regiment made at least fifty final preparations to do so, only to be ordered to remain in the valley for further orders.

Four days passed. Rain fell incessantly. The bottom of the valley became as slippery as glass. Men bogged up to their knees in mud. There were no boots. The mess was a succession of "corned willy," hardtack, and sugarless coffee meals.

At last, when every man and officer had reached the point of absolute disgust, the guns were dragged out of their mud-holes and hauled by horse and man power to the positions from which they were scheduled to launch their part of the drive.

Passing through the shell-torn village of Rupt-en-Woevre, the Second Battalion, of which Jimmy's battery was a part, swerved

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off the main road and followed a woods trail that seemed to lead straight into the noises and strange, mysterious lights of the front.

A gun barked out, not forty feet from the road. O. D. looked to Jimmy.

"Are we at the front now Jimmy?" he asked in a whisper.

"Don't know myself. Guess there's a battery in the woods near here. We'll be there soon now."

The firing was not very heavy that night. Occasionally a big gun spoke or the staccato voices of machine-guns stabbed the night air intermittenly. Flares and rockets went up frequently, causing the darkness of the woods that bordered the road to accentuate. O. D. owned some strange, indescribable feelings at times, but he could not identify any of them as the sensations which he had expected to experience upon his first intimacy with the things of the front.

The column halted at a crossroad. Orders to dismount came quickly and were repeated down the line of guns in ordinary tones. Before O. D. had a chance to ask what was going on platoon commanders had issued instructions for the piece teams to haul the guns into certain positions nearby.

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"Well, we're here. Now for the business," declared Jimmy.

"You mean we are at the front," gasped O. D., incredulously. "I thought—"

"Sure, we all thought the same thing when we came up the first time. Looked for sign-posts sayin', 'This is the front,' or a bunch of Germans tryin' to get us. Just like that No-Man's-Land stuff. I'd heard so much about that place before comin' to France that I thought it would be as easy to find as a piece of choice real estate. Kinda expected that it would be a square field, or somethin' like that, between two story-book trenches. First No Man's Land I ran into was in the middle of a village. Graveyard and church made most of it. The front's built on the same idea."

Jimmy selected a spot near the third piece and arranged a place for himself and O. D. Before O. D. fell asleep he mentioned that he wanted to write some letters to his mother and Mary.

At the sound of Mary's name Jimmy instinctively ran his hand over his breast pocket to see if the picture was still there. It was.

"You can write to-morrow, O. D."

"I can?" said O. D. "I thought it would be

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pretty hard to get a chance to write at the front."

"That's what most of the guys spend their time doin' when there ain't no firin' or work," assured Jimmy.

"Well, good night, old man."

"*Bon swoir,* O. D."

The mention of Mary made Jimmy forget about sleeping. Since the night that he had spent in the French house with O. D. he had been day-dreaming whenever the chance to do so came. He wondered if Mary was in love with somebody back in America or in France. That idea disquieted him a great deal, but judging from O. D.'s conversations, he felt at liberty to hope that her heart was still free.

When he was sure that O. D. was sound asleep Jimmy lit a cigarette and took Mary's picture out of his pocket. By drawing hard on the cigarette he caused a fire glow that was enough to enable him to catch glimpses of her face.

"Gosh! She's a pretty, slender somebody," mused the Yank to himself. "Bet she's as sweet as she looks. It'll be great gettin' letters from her. If I make this old *guerre* I'm sure goin' to know Mary O. D. But I'm a nut. What business have I got thinkin' that she'll

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even look at a bum like me? I'd disgrace her most likely in public, 'specially at a dinner-table, as I'd forget and use the old knife. Got to put the brakes on this cussin' stuff, too. I can imagine her if I said 'damn' in front of her. I'd be *fineed toot sweet.*" Jimmy put the picture away and puffed on while his dreams mingled with his blue cigarette smoke.

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XV

PINCHING OFF THE ST. MIHIEL SALIENT

BY noon of the next day Battery C's guns had all been securely emplaced. O. D. wrote three letters in the morning, all of which centered around Jimmy McGee and the front. In his letter to Mary he said, in part:

> You'll love Jimmy, he's so big and kind. If he ever got all cleaned and dressed he'd sure be handsome, but the boys don't have time for that kind of life up here.
>
> Mary, Jimmy never gets any letters, except from a few boys that work where he used to. His folks are all dead. I told him that you would write to him. He is sending you a German officer's helmet that he took from a German at Château-Thierry. You see, Jimmy has been at the front for a long time.
>
> I am at the front with him now. But, somehow, I don't feel like I thought I would. It doesn't seem so terribly dif-

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ferent from a place that we stopped at about twenty miles from here. Of course the guns make a lot of noise when they go off and there's all kinds of mysterious lights at night that make you think of ghosts at work. But the airplanes and bombs are what scare me most. . . .

Before supper was served on the afternoon of September 11th the guns of Jimmy McGee's regiment had registered on their targets and everything was in readiness to participate in the greatest effort that the First American Army was destined to make on the fields of France.

That night there were no certain indications that the drive would start immediately. The ordinary precautions were taken. But they alone did not suggest to the men that something big was about to happen. Yet, in the blood of them all, a fever was present which brought its presentiments.

"O. D., I got a hunch. Nothin' certain in this *guerre,* you know. But I've got a feelin' in my fingers that we're goin' to use old Betsy to-night," spoke Jimmy.

"Jimmy—Jimmy." Neil was calling him.

"*Oui.* What's up?"

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"How do things look to you?" asked Neil, crawling in the little shelter tent.

"I was just sayin' to O. D. that I've got a hunch—just like the one before the battle of Seicheprey—that somethin' is goin' to come off. Mighty damn quiet, though. But it's always that way before a real racket."

"What time have you got, O. D.?" asked Neil.

"Darn near midnight. Jimmy and I have been sittin' around talking a good deal. What are you doing up?"

"I'm on guard to-night."

The shrill blast of a pocket whistle interrupted him and caused the three of them to jump a little.

"'Callin' to the guns, boys," whispered Jimmy. "I knew somethin' was in the wind. Get ready, O. D."

"I've got to beat it, then," said Neil, getting out.

In a few seconds Jimmy and O. D. were running toward their gun-pit. Soon afterward the other members of the crew were at their stations.

Just as the executive officer was giving out the firing data the world seemed caught in the vortex of a terrible electrical storm.

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Up in front of Battery C's position a barrage from the seventy-five's crashed into life. Big guns away behind the position began to bay.

Jimmy got orders to fire. The darkness of night was lost in blinding flashes of yellow flames that came from the thundering guns. Shells whined and whistled on their way toward the German trenches and positions. O. D. rammed the shells home, wondering if the world was coming to an end. The roar of the pieces, the rattle of machine-guns, the earth that quivered beneath him and the skies that seemed to be blazing with varicolored fires assailed his ears, his eyes, and his soul with a violence that he had never dreamed of. He looked to Jimmy for confidence. Jimmy was working his sights and traversing the piece as if he were listening to a jazz victrola record. O. D. bit his lips. He knew that one of his real trials was at hand.

The din of battle became a unison of wild, barbaric music. Out where the doughboys were going over, under the barrages, rockets crawled against the livid heavens. O. D. thought of dragons and unearthly monsters as he watched these things.

The scream of a shell, more sinister than

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the rest, caused O. D.'s hair to stand up straight.

"That one's comin' in," bawled out Jimmy.

Another shell whistled in the same fashion.

B—A—N—G!

The sound of an explosion new to the ears of O. D. throttled the vicinity of his piece. A human cry made itself heard above the angry roaring of the guns.

"Somebody got it—poor guy!" shouted Jimmy. O. D. nodded and kept on placing the shells on the tray and ramming them in the smoking breech.

For four hours the battle storm raged incessantly. During those hours Jimmy's gun crew worked away with straining muscles. There was no mental or spiritual strain attached to their labor. They were hardened to the unnatural sounds and sights of modern fighting. But O. D., new to the things of big action, face to face with the relentless fury of war for the first time, had to contend with both the physical and spiritual conditions which presented themselves. He was naturally strong; but four hours of work, under stress of fighting, made his arms and back feel as if they were breaking. No man, however iron of will and nerves, can go through

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his first battle without some demoralization of his mental forces. O. D. was only an ordinary boy. Naturally he suffered his share of spiritual anguish in the trying moments of competition for the control of his soul powers before the onslaught of terrors that threatened to smash his nerve and courage.

When orders to cease firing came O. D. was tired and a bit wan. But he had found himself. That alone counted with him. A few moments later, when Jimmy asked him how he liked it, O. D. found himself answering:

"It kind of got me at first—especially when that wounded man cried out. But when I didn't stop to think, and kept on working, I didn't mind it so much.

"That's the stuff. Now you've heard all the noise that they can make in this war, so you're done with that experience. The rest of the stuff is only incidental-like," said Jimmy. "Course somebody's got to get killed or wounded. There wouldn't be no war if that didn't happen. But it won't be us. It's always the other guy. *Compree?*"

"*Oui,*" answered O. D.

"Get yourself together, boys, we're pullin' right out. O. P.'s report that the Germans

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are hauling it fast. Hardly any resistance. *Beaucoup* prisoners comin' in. Thousands, they say. The old doughboys are goin' like hell," shouted Neil, running up to O. D. and Jimmy.

"That's the old pep. Come on, O. D., we're off to another fight," and Jimmy started on the run for the tent.

The first few sharp points of dawn were piercing the haze of early morning as Jimmy, O. D., and the rest of the outfit started across the decaying stretch of land southeast of wrecked Mouilly. For four long years the ground that the Yankees trampled underfoot had been the No Man's Land between the German and French lines. There was no real road, just a winding succession of shell-holes and gaping craters, bordered on one side by a water-filled trench that had been the late target of American guns. On the other side of the ruined road stretched a bumpy, chaotic plain, out of which the snags of shell-smashed trees lifted jagged points and shattered limbs. Rusty barbed wire was strung in baffling tangles from every charred stump and smoking post. Demolished guns, rifles, bayonets, and sundry articles of equipment were lit-

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tered over the grim terrain. Gray desolation, destruction, and barrenness abounded.

"This is what they call the *Grande Tranchée*, O. D. Never seen anything like this, even in the movin' pictures, did you?" questioned Jimmy.

O. D.'s eyes were fastened on a gruesome heap of headless men whose bodies were torn, twisted, and partly covered by debris. He shuddered before answering.

"No, Jimmy. Look down there," pointing to the dead.

"*Oui,* Boches," responded Jimmy, casually. "Sure tore up this place some. Our old Betsy was landin' 'em down here. Ain't nothin' over three feet high 'round here."

A long column of German prisoners filed by under guard of American doughboys.

"What outfit, buddy?" asked Jimmy of a guard.

"First Division," answered the man.

"Seen much of the Twenty-sixth doughboys?" questioned Jimmy.

"*Oui,* they beat us into Vigunelles. Those guys sure bagged some Boches," and the guard picked up a faster step with his prisoners.

The attack was still in force and shells were

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plowing up the broken ground in every direction when the battery arrived opposite a German cemetery. Orders were received at that point for the regiment to go into position behind the hills of St. Rémy. The tired and worn columns entered the woods by a road that had been used by the Germans only the day before.

"The Boches must have thought that they was here to stay, by the looks of this joint," said Jimmy, pointing to the graveyard with its high stone fence and tall tombstones. "The Boches got in here four years ago and never moved till last night. That accounts for all this stuff. Guess they had regular funerals and church services for the guys that got knocked off. Just goes to show how they was fightin' the *guerre* up here. Livin' the life of Riley and didn't know it."

He and O. D. climbed over the fence and inspected some of the tombstones. They came to an exceptionally big one.

"Guess this gink must have been a general. Can't read Boche, but most likely all the stuff reads, 'He died for God and Country.' See that 'Gott' business on 'em all. Everybody pulls the same line when a guy gets killed. Funny thing, but there ain't many

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shell-holes in cemeteries. Now and then you see one all turned upside down from shell-fire. But most of 'em that I've seen get by somehow. Maybe the shells get superstitious."

"There is where one shell hit." O. D. showed Jimmy a grave that had been dug out by a shell.

"*Oui.* Even the dead don't get no rest in this *guerre,*" declared Jimmy.

The whine of an incoming shell caused them both to fall flat on their bellies. An explosion followed. Dirt and stones covered them from head to foot.

"Beat it *toot sweet.* This joint ain't no place for a live man, O. D.," and Jimmy started for the wall at double-time. They caught up with the battery a few minutes before the order to halt came.

"We're goin' to use an old German position here," said Neil, coming up to Jimmy. "You never saw such stuff in your life. The Boches have got dug-outs fifty feet deep. Regular places, beds, sofas, everything. You'd think they had bought the place for a resort.

"That's nothin'," broke in Pop Rigney. "Down at the foot of the hill in Hattonville

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they've got regular theaters built up. Boche *cafés*. They say Boche women used to live here with the officers. Joyce found some silk stockings and a woman's hat in one dug-out."

Jimmy and O. D. went on an exploration tour immediately. They found that the dug-outs were all built of cement and stone and must have necessitated months in construction. A piano, all smashed up, was found in one. There were various kinds of mysterious cords and wires in most of the *abris*. O. D. said that he thought they must be attached to bells, but Jimmy warned him that the Boches had most likely left them tied to some kind of death-dealing engine and to keep his hands off. That same day a member of the outfit tampered with a string and had his left hand mangled by a hand grenade which fell to the stone floor as a result and exploded on contact.

The Germans had fled so precipitately from their positions that they even left all the guns behind them. The men found souvenirs galore, but threw most of them away, as they had no means of carting around extra stuff.

"I'm off the souvenir stuff. I'll be good enough souvenir if I get myself back," said

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Jimmy as he discarded some German belts that he had picked up.

"Guess we'll get back and *monjay*. 'Ain't had any breakfast yet, you know," suggested Neil.

In the mess-line the talk was running fast. Samson and Johnson, who had been up in the O. P.'s with the doughboys and had just returned to the outfit, told about the capture of St. Mihiel and the speed with which the Boches were evacuating the salient.

"We're in a hell of a fix, though," said Samson. Can't move another inch forward. There's a plain twenty kilometers deep in front of us. The Boches have got high ground behind it and we couldn't go across it without losing the whole division. Guess we'll have to stand pat awhile. Ain't that hell?"

His words panned out true. Before the guns of the Yankee division lay a great deep plain. To send men out into that plain meant to expose them to certain death with no possibility of a military advantage being obtained by so doing. Consequently, with the exception of a sacrifice attack planned against the enemy to divert his attention from the major operations being launched in the Ar-

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gonne forest, the division remained in its victorious tracks for nearly six weeks. The sacrifice attack succeeded, but it cost the division almost the entire One Hundred and Second Infantry Regiment.

During this time O. D. drank to the dregs of the front. He became able to distinguish the difference between the whine of an ordinary shell and the whistle of a gas shell. Whizz-bangs got to be a part of his vocabulary, and he knew enough to duck *toot sweet* when he heard one coming. The mud stuck to him as Neil told him it would. He became friendly with cooties.

"Damn it all, Jimmy," said O. D. five weeks after the St. Mihiel salient had been nipped off by the pinchers of the First American Army, "if they'd only lay off that 'canned willy' once in a while this *guerre* wouldn't be half bad. Say, I lost my gas-mask two days ago, wonder if Joyce has got any in yet. The Boches are puttin' gas over right along now."

"Hope the hell we get up to a regular front again soon," replied Jimmy, offering O. D. a cigarette. "Since Austria blew up we ought to get behind the Boches and push 'em right in the Rhine."

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XVI

BEYOND VERDUN

"IS this place hot enough to suit you, Jimmy?" asked O. D. as he and Jimmy huddled in a water-filled shell-hole while a drove of barrack bags went skimming over their heads.

"I'll say, *oui*," replied Jimmy. "Wish for a thing and you'll sure get it. Remember my wishing that they'd send us to a real front. There ain't no camouflage to this joint. Listen to that damn machine-gun music, will you?"

From the depths of the Haumont Bois issued the frenzied snapping and barking of machine-guns that contrasted strangely with the unending thunder-roll of the heavy guns.

Before Jimmy and his pal was the pivot upon which the German defenses in the Argonne depended. Upon that cemented pivot was hinged the hopes of the German High Command. If the pivot was forced the entire line of defenses that swung

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back and forth like a red, intangible thing in the depth of the Argonne woods would be swept away by the intrepid American troops. The Prussian militarists had rushed some of their finest divisions in front of Verdun to stay the advance of American soldiers who had been ordered to unhinge the pivotal defense at all costs.

It mattered not that companies and battalions were cut to pieces and mowed down by the hidden machine-gun fire of the Germans who held the high ground and were securely intrenched. The order was to force the pivot. Jimmy's division had been ordered to unhinge it.

For three weeks he and his comrades had advanced yard by yard, each yard calling for the sacrifice of many brave men. After the third day in the lines beyond Verdun Jimmy had looked for his friend Neil, to learn that an ugly shell wound had sent him to the hospital. An entire new gun crew was manning the first piece, as every man had been killed or wounded when a German two-hundred-and-twenty made a direct hit on the howitzer. The Boches had been using gas with deadly effect. Ten men that he knew very well had been caught by the poisonous

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fumes and were evacuated to a hospital. Death had come pretty close to both Jimmy and O. D., but by some law of destiny they had come through unscratched.

"We might try to get back now, O. D." Jimmy raised himself cautiously and scanned their surroundings.

A shell whistled, almost in his ear. He ducked down again.

"That drink of water may cost us a lot before we get back. Gee! but I was thirsty. No water in three days. It'll be three more before we can pull this stunt again. Think them damn Heinies have got us under observation. Stuff's comin' mighty close. They're breakin' right over by that hill." He pointed to a hill not a hundred yards away. It was perforated by shell hits and blue smoke was rising from a dozen places where shells had lately exploded.

"Dick said we were goin' to fire again, *toot sweet,* so we'll have to make a dive for it. You follow me, O. D."

Jimmy squirmed out of the slimy hole and crawled away in the direction of his position. O. D. followed behind at about ten yards' interval. The condition of O. D.'s clothing made him look like a tramp. His wrap put-

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tees were mud-soaked and ripped in many places. His breeches were as dirty as Jimmy's had ever been. He had the front written all over him. The *guerre* had stamped its trade-mark upon O. D.

After fifteen minutes of snakelike progress Jimmy and O. D. reached the position. There wasn't a soul to be seen. Everybody and everything lived below the surface in those terrible days and nights beyond Verdun.

"Let's get down to the old hole and lie quiet till it's time to fire," and Jimmy crawled down to what he and O. D. called "the hole."

It was their home. The boys had stretched their canvas shelter-halves over the top of a crater made by a giant shell. Underneath this protection was their stock and store of worldly possessions, which consisted of an odd sock, a suit of dirty underclothes, and a little box that held a few personal trinkets. Raincoats, and what little extra underclothes they once owned, had been lost in the advance from Verdun.

Jimmy got to "the hole" first.

"Great Lord, O. D.! Here's some mail. Ration cart just brought it up from the *échelon*. Guess it's all for you. No here's three for me," he cried, excitedly.

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Mail it was. The first that they had seen in nearly a month. Jimmy had three letters from Mary and in one was two pictures.

"To hell with this *guerre!*" shouted Jimmy, jumping up.

"What's the matter, Jimmy? Get good news from some of the boys?" asked O. D.

"Boys hell!" answered Jimmy. "They're from Mary—" then he stopped short and felt kind of foolish.

"Oh!" exclaimed O. D. "I knew Mary would write if I told her to. I've got some from her and mother."

The two boys read their letters on in silence. The more that Jimmy read of Mary's letters the more he was willing to believe the rumors that had been coming in by radio that the Germans might sign an armistice. In fact, you could have told Jimmy almost anything at that moment and he would have believed it. He studied Mary's new pictures with the one that he had taken from O. D. O. D. caught him in the act.

"Mary gave me one of those seashore pictures before I left, but I lost it some place lately," said O. D., looking at the two new pictures.

"Yes, I guess you did, O. D. I swiped it

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from you. Don't mind, do you, old man? I wanted a picture of Mary."

"Did you take that one, Jimmy?"

"Oui."

"Anything you do, old boy, is O. K. with me. You know that, Jimmy, don't you?" asked the brother of Mary.

"Bet I do, O. D. Funny how guys get to be pals up here, ain't it! Back in the States you and me would have passed each other up, most likely. Out here it's mighty darn different. Makes a fellow get down under the skin of things. I feel like I've known you all my life, O. D."

"So do I, Jimmy. I never knew any fellow as good as I've come to know you."

"Well, when men get close to dyin' with each other, when they've starved side by side and damn near froze to death under the same pieces of cheesecloth, it ain't any wonder that they find out who and what each other is. Do you know, it's gettin' colder every night? We've got to rustle up some more coverin' soon or we'll pass out one of these nights. It's that cold mud underneath us that puts ice in the bones. Look here, O. D., don't you wake up in the night no more and listen to me talk in my sleep 'bout cold and put your

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coat over me. Keep it on your side. I'm more used to this stuff than you," commanded Jimmy.

"I wasn't cold, Jimmy, honest. Think I'll turn over and *cushay* a while. We 'ain't slept in forty-eight hours now. There won't be anything to *monjay* tonight; stuff got in too late for supper. Goin' to give us some coffee and stuff 'round nine o'clock."

"Well, we'll both crawl in and knock out some sleep," said Jimmy, and they got under their thin dirt-spattered blankets and fell into sound slumber with no effort.

Three hours later Jimmy and O. D. were throttled out of their sleep by the banging of incoming shells and the quaking of earth that shivered and shook as the shells ripped great smoking holes in its sides.

Between the bangs and the crashes they caught the piping of the whistle that called them to the pits. Twenty seconds later Sergeant Dick Dennis, chief of Jimmy's gun section, sang out to the executive officer, "Third section in order, sir."

"Battery—On basic deflection—Right, One—Three—Zero—F. A. shell—I. A. L. fuse—Charge double zero—Site zero—One hundred

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rounds—At my command—Elevation five, six three," shouted the executive officer.

There was grim silence in the gun-pits. A shell came tearing over and hit fifty yards from the first piece. Fragments and stones pattered down through the trees.

"F—I—R—E!" was the command.

Four flashes illuminated the night shadows and four guns loosened their brass tongues of thunder. The ground rocked. The air quivered. The pieces bayed and roared on like mad, fire-spitting animals. Joining their voices in the savage symphony of death that filled the woods they crowded that particular part of the world with an infernal clamor.

Down in the cozy mire of their gun-pit Jimmy McGee and his gang worked hands over fists to keep Betsy roaring. Almost ten months on the line had made them indifferent to enemy fire, especially if they were fighting back, so they labored on while the Hun missiles came tearing overhead, spilling their contents of death dangerously near.

O. D., working directly behind Jimmy, marveled at his pal's coolness in adjusting sights and elevations, unconscious of the fact that

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he was almost as cool in his own work as Jimmy.

An explosion more terrific than any previous one shook the entire vicinity of the battery position. After the crash of bursting steel and iron had ended agonized cries were torn from the throats of suffering men. Piteous pleadings for aid filled the flame-shot night. Above the groans that were racked by pain a voice called out, "First piece out of order, sir." A fit of coughing followed the report.

Spare men and the two Sanitary Corps men rushed to the pit of the first section where the shell had landed and demolished the gun while tearing the crew into lifeless or quivering wrecks of humans. Everything that could be done for the men was accomplished heedless of the incoming shells. Every moment brought an increasing number of shells into the immediate vicinity of the battery position. Trees were smashed and chewed to bits. Earth was thrown high into the air. Tree branches mingled with the shell splinters that rained down.

"Second section out of order, sir," shouted the chief of that section. His gunner had reported that the bore would not stand an-

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other shot. The piece had been recommended for the mobile repair shop two weeks before.

"Second section, abandon your piece. Take cover," ordered the executive officer, crowding data for the third and fourth piece on top of that command.

Jimmy McGee's crew was still putting them over when fragments from a shell that had ruined the fourth section knocked his Nos. 4 and 6 down. Short-handed he kept the hot one-hundred-and-fifty-five howitzer going. O. D. was still hanging on the rammer and pushing the big shells in the breech.

Captain Henderson rushed into the pit.

"You men take shelter. Your gun's the only one left in action."

"Please don't make us quit, Pop. Pardon, sir. Shoot the dope along. We'll stick, won't we, O. D.?"

"Bet we will, Jimmy!" shot back O. D., grimly, as he helped his No. 5 get the shell on the tray.

The answer had barely escaped his lips when a shell made a direct hit on a tree behind the pit. O. D. fell to the ground. Jimmy McGee sank down with a stifled groan. The two boys left in the pit toppled like young trees from the blow of a mighty ax.

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The captain, who was untouched, raised Jimmy and got his knee under his head.

"Get Bacon or March, the first-aid men, quick!" commanded the captain to a man who was stumbling over the debris in the pit.

"Both of 'em are down, sir; got hit. The boys are havin' a hell of a time with the wounded." The man stooped to pick up Dick Dennis, who had been killed outright.

"My God!" groaned Henderson, tearing away Jimmy's blouse to get at his wounded arm.

"Cap—cap," called Jim, feebly. Henderson bent over him. "I've only got a splinter —only stunned. Get to O. D. first." Jimmy tried to get loose and go to O. D., who lay quiet in a pool of blood.

"Johnson—Johnson, try to bind O. D.'s wound," ordered the C. O., turning to a man who sat all huddled up amid the horror and torture, puffing wildly at a cigarette like some grotesque being.

"Can't touch him," answered Johnson, blowing a mouthful of smoke after the jerky words. "God have mercy on me," he kept repeating. The fellow's nerve was gone. Henderson had seen a few like him before. He let him alone.

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Jimmy crawled to O. D.

"O. D.—O. D.! Talk to me! God! Look at his back; it's all busted up. O. D., I'm Jimmy. Answer me, boy," implored his pal.

Henderson came with a mess-cup full of water and some bandages.

The water brought O. D. to a state of semi-consciousness. Jimmy saw his eyes flutter open about half-way and he started talking again.

"We're fixin' you, boy—hang on. The Boches never was made to get you and me. We got to go back to Mary, O. D."

"Jimmy—Jimmy—" The name was called so faintly that Jimmy could hardly hear it. He bent his ear close to O. D.'s blue lips.

"I'm listenin', pal. What is it?"

"You go back—back—back—to Mary for—" The words trembled and stopped short.

"For you, O. D.?" supplied Jimmy.

"*Oui,*" gasped the dying boy.

"But you'll go, too, O. D. Hell, you can't die now."

"Yes—die—later—see you—somewhere—Good-by, Jim—" Death cut the words short.

A great lump rose in Jimmy McGee's throat. Something warm and salty burned his eyes. He pressed his good hand against the

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torn back of his pal and tried to staunch the incessant red flow with his fingers. Captain Henderson removed him tenderly from the body of his pal a few moments later and led Jimmy, dry-eyed and white-faced, over to the dressing-station.

"Just the way of it, cap. The best guys gets it. Poor O. D.!" muttered Jimmy as they bound up his splintered arm.

They buried O. D. in a shell-hole and wrapped his body in the blankets and shelter-halves that he and Jimmy had slept between. Jimmy looked at the sad mound of earth and then let them take him away to the ambulance that was to bring him and two others down to the *échelon* infirmary. His wound was not deemed serious enough for hospital treatment.

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XVII

"FINEE! LA GUERRE FINEE!"

IN the somber shadow of gaunt, historic Verdun the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 crawled slowly toward its epoch-making eleventh hour. The progress of each advancing minute was accompanied by a bombardment that started in a rumbling basso-profoundo of fourteen-inch naval guns and reached its crescendo of barbaric medley in a crackling cataract of machine-gun fire.

"You can't tell me that this *guerre* is goin' to *finee toot sweet,*" asserted Jimmy McGee to an infirmary orderly. "Listen to that hell-bent-for-election noise." He paused to allow himself and the orderly to appreciate the significance of his assertion.

Both had grown accustomed to the thunder of barrages and the din of battles, but their ears were not listening to any ordinary bombardment. Their pals in arms were putting over the heaviest artillery fusillade that had ever made the base of Verdun's brave citadel

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tremble. The noise was magnificent and awe-inspiring. The men held their tongues awhile. Then Jimmy spoke.

"Maybe it's possible, but I doubt it. How the hell can they stop a thing like this *guerre* so quick?"

"Damn if I know. Sounds like bull to me, but the radio order says that we stop fightin' at eleven o'clock. That's all I know," answered the orderly.

"I'm going to breeze 'round a bit. If it's straight dope I'll blow up to the position. Want to get a picture of O. D.'s grave. Camouflage me if any of them guys get wonderin' where I am. The old wing's gettin' *trés-bon* now, anyhow. They might just as well let me go back to the battery," and Jimmy took his bandaged left arm out of its sling just to prove his words.

"Go on, I'll cover you up," said the orderly.

Jimmy wandered through the different barracks of the regimental *échelon* and finally landed at Headquarters Office.

"What's the dope, Barney?" asked Jimmy of a bespectacled sergeant who sat humped over a desk full of morning reports.

"The *guerre* is *finee* at eleven o'clock," was the answer in slow, methodic tones.

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"I WANT TO GET A PICTURE OF O. D.'S GRAVE"

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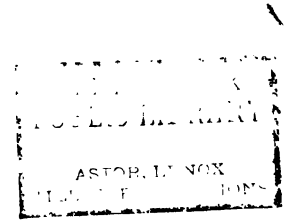

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"Guess it's straight enough if Barney believes it," muttered Jimmy, closing the door.

He found Joyce, borrowed a pocket camera from him, and started for the front. Jimmy evaded Verdun and picked the straight road from Thierville to Bras. From Bras he intended following the muddy trail that led directly to the present position of his outfit.

A continuous stream of nondescript traffic flowed past him going in the direction of the *échelons*. Captured Boche wagons, ammunition limbers, ration-trucks, caissons, staff cars, and ambulances were some of the vehicles that passed Jimmy as he plodded along. Their presence on the road at ten-thirty in the morning was a significant thing in itself. He knew that such heavy traffic was forbidden on roads that were under enemy fire during the hours of daylight. But the rattle and clatter of the motley traffic could not drown out the fury of the American bombardment.

"Well, it's *finee,* old man," shouted a man in fatigue clothes riding a balky mule.

"*Oui,*" responded Jimmy, unenthusiastically.

At Bras Jimmy stopped at one of the am-

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bulance stations to watch them load on some boys who had just been wounded.

"Where the hell are you bound. The *guerre's finee.*"

Jimmy looked at the speaker. He was Mike Merrowitz, of his own outfit.

"Goin' up to the battery. What the hell did you do to your arm, Mike?"

"Nothin' much. Was mendin' a broken wire early this mornin' and a piece of shell got me there. Doc said they might have to cut it off at the elbow. But I don't believe it's that bad. Remember my tellin' you that I'd go through this *guerre* and get walloped on the last day? Well, the damn thing is *finee,* anyhow. Take care, Jimmy," he admonished, looking at his bandaged arm.

Jimmy McGee could only nod his answer. The idea that a man could go through the war as long as Mike had and then get hit during the last minute of play was beyond him. He began wondering if it was all a mistake about the *guerre* being finished. The banging of the guns certainly didn't help him to renew his faith in all the statements that he had heard to the effect that fighting would end at eleven o'clock.

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It was exactly ten-forty-five when he started out on the second lap of his trip.

"Fifteen minutes to make good in," muttered Jimmy to himself.

Along the sides of the slimy trail strange things were happening. Men began to appear on the surface. Horses and mules browsed around, hunting for a green patch of grass.

"What time have you got, buddy?" asked Jimmy of a man who was stripped to the waist and washing in an honest attempt to remove some of the dirt that had accumulated on his body since the wash of two months ago.

The man stopped and picked up his wrist watch. "Five minutes before knocking-off time, Jack," was the casual reply.

"Five minutes," repeated Jimmy McGee, doubtfully. "Say, do you think it'll *finee* at eleven?" he asked.

"Sure," was the confident reply. "It started in ten minutes; why the hell can't it end in a few minutes?"

"Guess it can, but it seems funny as hell to talk 'bout the *guerre* endin'. Why, there's been times lately when I thought the damn

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thing would never *finee,*" stated Jimmy, very solemnly.

"It will be strange to have it all finished. But I can get along without it. Say, I wonder when the hell we'll go home, Jack?"

"Great God! I'd never thought of that. If this *guerre finees* to-day we ought to get a crack at the first boats. Been over here long enough. Can you imagine gettin' back to the old life, wearin' garters and stuff like that?"

"Too much for me, Jack," admitted the man as he scrubbed away.

The bombardment seemed just in the act of flinging all of its violence into their ears when the roar of cannon and the shrieking of shells toned down to a puny whisper. A few seconds of scattered "booms" passed. Then a silence unknown to that part of the world settled over the vicinity of Verdun.

The guns of war had been hushed as if by the magic command of some invisible master voice.

Jimmy and the man looked at each other, stunned into dumbness by the miracle of silence. Five minutes passed in strange quietude.

"Guess I'll blow up to the guns and see

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how the boys are takin' this stuff," said Jimmy, slowly.

"Well, it's *finee,* sure as hell," declared the man. He was reading his shirt and snapping his catches between thumb-nails.

"So long, bud; I'll meet you in Boston," was Jimmy's parting shot.

"In Boston, eh?" replied the man as if a new and pleasing idea had occurred to him. "*Oui*—in Boston."

The pockmarked hills that sloped down to meet the trail and mingle muddy rivulets with the slimy water that stagnated in its shell-holes took on a new lease of life as Jimmy surveyed them. Dark rings of smoke curled upward. The forms of men and animals began to appear, slowly at first, as if the bowels of the earth were giving up their recent inhabitants with great reluctance. Gradually whole processions of men moved against the horizons made by the dip and rise of Verdun's storied hills. Mules and horses scampered at liberty and joined their braying and neighing with the sounds of human life that were heard in the great silence that obtained.

Turning an abrupt curve Jimmy McGee was almost upon his battery. Even Jimmy, who

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had grown to believe that he had seen every sight that the front could offer, admitted that the scene before him was unusual.

Humans and creatures who had been spending most of the last two months below the surface were breathing God's free air once more without risking their lives by so doing. Men in undershirts, some without any, most all of them bareheaded, were stretching, washing, shaving, talking, and doing many other simple and ordinary things as if they were all undergoing a novel experience. There was not a clean-faced man in the crowd.

The four guns that had been participating in the final barrage of the war stood in their crude emplacements like stage-settings in a scene that had been deserted by all of the actors. They looked forlorn and lonely in their abandonment.

Equipment, most of it soiled, stained, and rusty, was piled in little heaps. A batch of rations had been uncovered and lay exposed to the possibility of unlawful seizure, as guards were a nonentity. Smoke issued from a field range that was in operation. The rattle of mess-kits announced the fact that the small line of men who had formed for mess were hungry.

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Jimmy made for a group of men who were standing around a bucket of water, waiting their turn to wash.

"Hello, Sammy; how's the boy?" asked McGee of a short, stocky lad in the waiting line of toilet-makers.

"*Bon,* Jimmy," responded Sampson. "What do you think of this guerre being *fineed?*"

"Gosh! I can hardly believe it."

"I keep thinking that it's liable to start up any old time," admitted Sammy.

"Are you goin' down to the *échelon,* Sammy?"

"*Oui, toot sweet.* Wait till I get a ton of this dirt off and I'll hike along with you."

"All right, I'm goin' to look 'round just a bit. Will see you at the kitchen."

"*Trey-beans.*"

Jimmy toured the position and inspected his Betsy.

"Well, old girl, you're *finee* now," he said, patting the barrel of his faithful piece affectionately.

He talked with all the boys he met. The one big question that they put to him was, "Know when we go home, Jimmy?" But

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that was a query beyond his power to answer. A few hinted that the division might be sent into Germany as a part of the Army of Occupation. These suggestions were routed by indignant denial of such a possibility.

"They'll never send this outfit to Germany. We're slated for home. Let them guys that just got over here take a crack at that stuff," snapped Pop Rigney.

Later, after they had mess, Jimmy and Sammy started cross-country for Thierville so that they might pass O. D.'s grave and make a picture of it.

Jimmy found the mound of earth that covered the mortal remains of his pal, and after arranging the helmet on the crude little cross he photographed the grave and walked away with the remark, "O. D. was sure one white man, Sammy."

They continued in silence until the outskirts of Verdun were reached.

"Gee! there's something goin' on in town," declared Sammy.

The sound of pealing bells and stirring music reached their ears. They quickened their step. Cheering and shouts sounded above the music.

A bearded poilu came tearing out of a

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"A BEARDED POILU CAME TEARING OUT OF A RUINED HOUSE, WAVING A BOTTLE OVER HIS HEAD"

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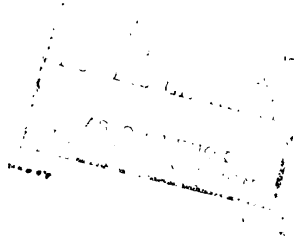

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ruined house, waving a bottle over his head.

"*Finee! La guerre finee!*" he shouted, and offered them the bottle. They drank and shouted back:

"*Oui. Finee.* Hurrah!"

The grizzled poilu and the two Americans sallied down the narrow street to locate the music. Progress became difficult after the trio reached one of the main streets. Soldiers —for there were very few civilians residing in the battered remnants of Verdun—piled out of every doorway and alley, most of them singing and shouting. Finally, after stopping to drink the success of the armistice with at least ten different parties of poilus and Yanks, Jimmy, Sammy, and their new friend found themselves in the square where a parade was forming.

A hastily organized band crashed out the stirring music of "Quand Madelon." The mob cheered itself into action and started off behind the band. Flags, mostly American, waved above the surging crowds. Another band, half American and half French, swung into the square playing the "Marseillaise." Then "The Star-Spangled Banner" brought a thunderous volley of applause.

"*La guerre c'est finie,*" was the predomi-

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nating cry. *"Vivent les Américains!"* was the second in strength.

Most of the demonstrations came from the throats of the French whose natural dramatic and emotional temperament responded to the occasion more quickly than did the less demonstrative make-ups of the Yankee soldiers. But it was only natural that the French should have indulged in greater feelings and demonstrations than their brothers in arms, the Americans, for they had borne the yoke of war years longer. It was wonderful to see the worn lines on veteran poilu faces as their sternness relaxed in smiles and laughs.

Jimmy and Sammy found themselves drinking wine and other liquors with many strange men. The password to good-fellowship was *"Finee, la guerre finee,"* and when the liquor began to assert itself in the blood of the men who acclaimed the Allied triumph on the streets of Verdun good-fellowship reached its zenith.

That night the men of Jimmy's section were gathered around a cheery-looking beer keg in a comfortable barrack at Thierville hashing over the *guerre* and its swift dramatic dénouement. The flight of the Kaiser and the downfall of his military empire had dwindled

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into a meaningless fact before the expanding idea of an early departure for home.

"Home! Great Lord, it ain't possible!" ejaculated one man as he looked wistfully into the blazing fire that roared up a great open fireplace. A bit of silence followed on the heels of his remark. Then Limy Mills and Vine started singing the chorus of "There's a Long, Long Trail Awinding." Twenty-throats, unsteady from an emotion that was new and yet old, joined in the singing.

Jimmy McGee, sitting in a far corner of the room, looked up from the letter that he was writing to Mary O. D. and listened while a strange yearning for something that the song suggested mastered his feelings.

Four days later Jimmy McGee's outfit rolled down the "Sacred Road" of France. No officer or enlisted man knew its destination. All that any man could be certain of was that he was headed for the rear.

Jimmy, lacking a roll and stripped of sundry equipments that he had carried over the same road three months before, followed behind his Betsy.

"What outfit, buddy?" asked an engineer who leaned on his shovel to watch the decrepit parade pass.

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"Twenty-sixth division," answered Jimmy.

"You guys are goin' home *toot sweet*, ain't you?" questioned the engineer.

"So they tell us, buddy," responded the Yankee veteran as a man does who speaks from another world. His thoughts were four thousand miles away. they stretched across the ocean and reached a certain, slender somebody who answered the name of Mary O. D. in the thoughts of Jimmy McGee.

"Gee! It sure will be tough tryin' to tell her and her mother 'bout O. D. I wonder what Mary'll think of me," and Jimmy McGee trudged along to accept the future, even as he had accepted the *guerre*.

THE END

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